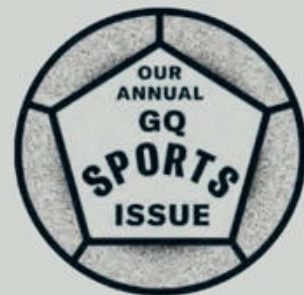




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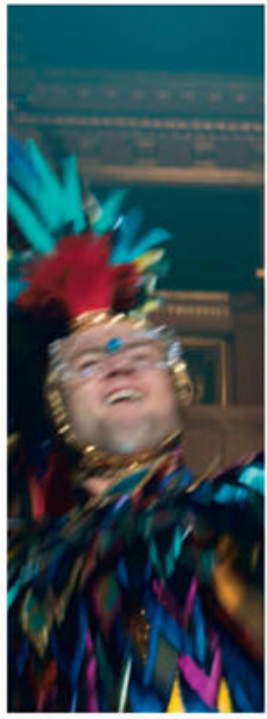
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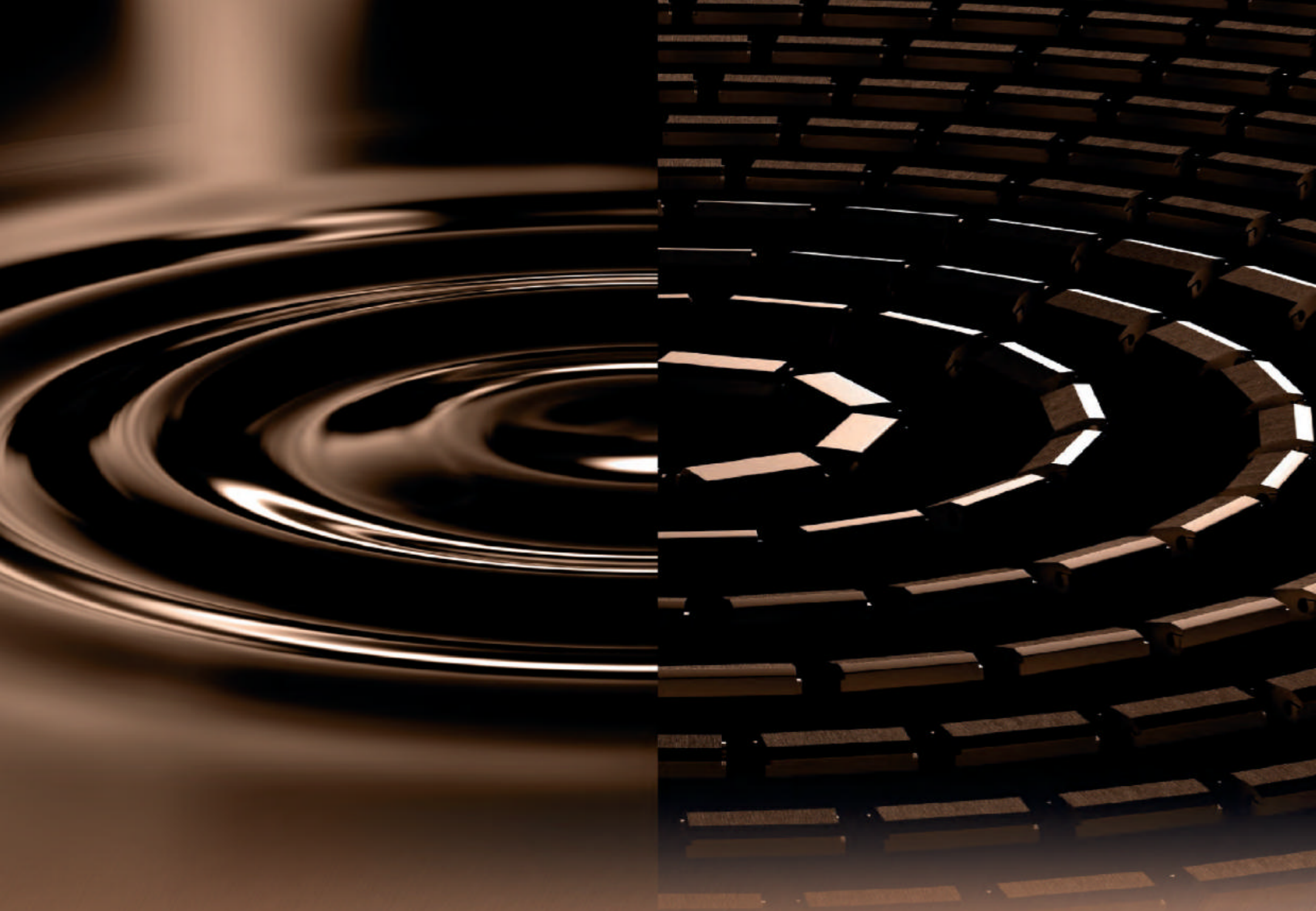
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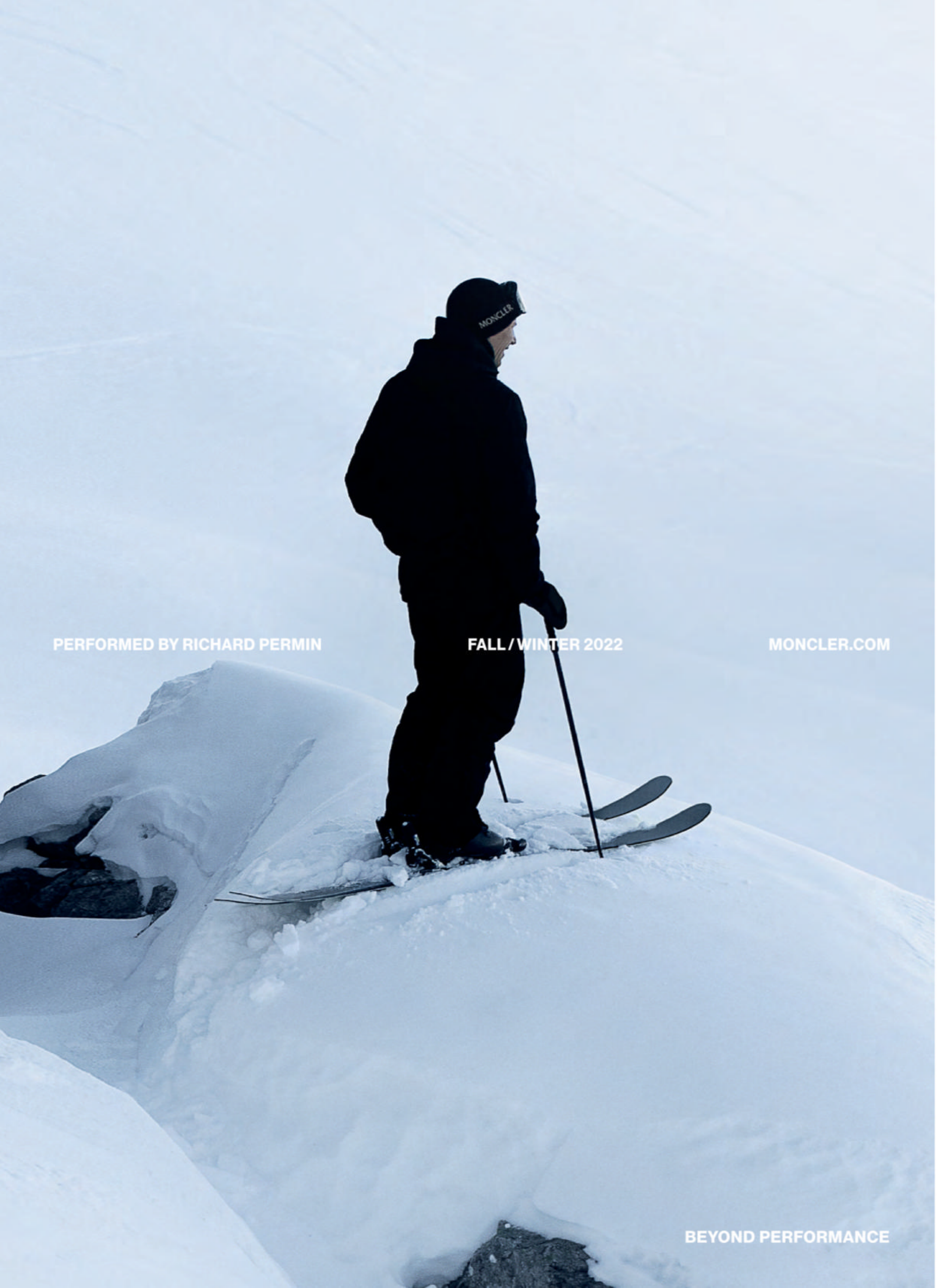
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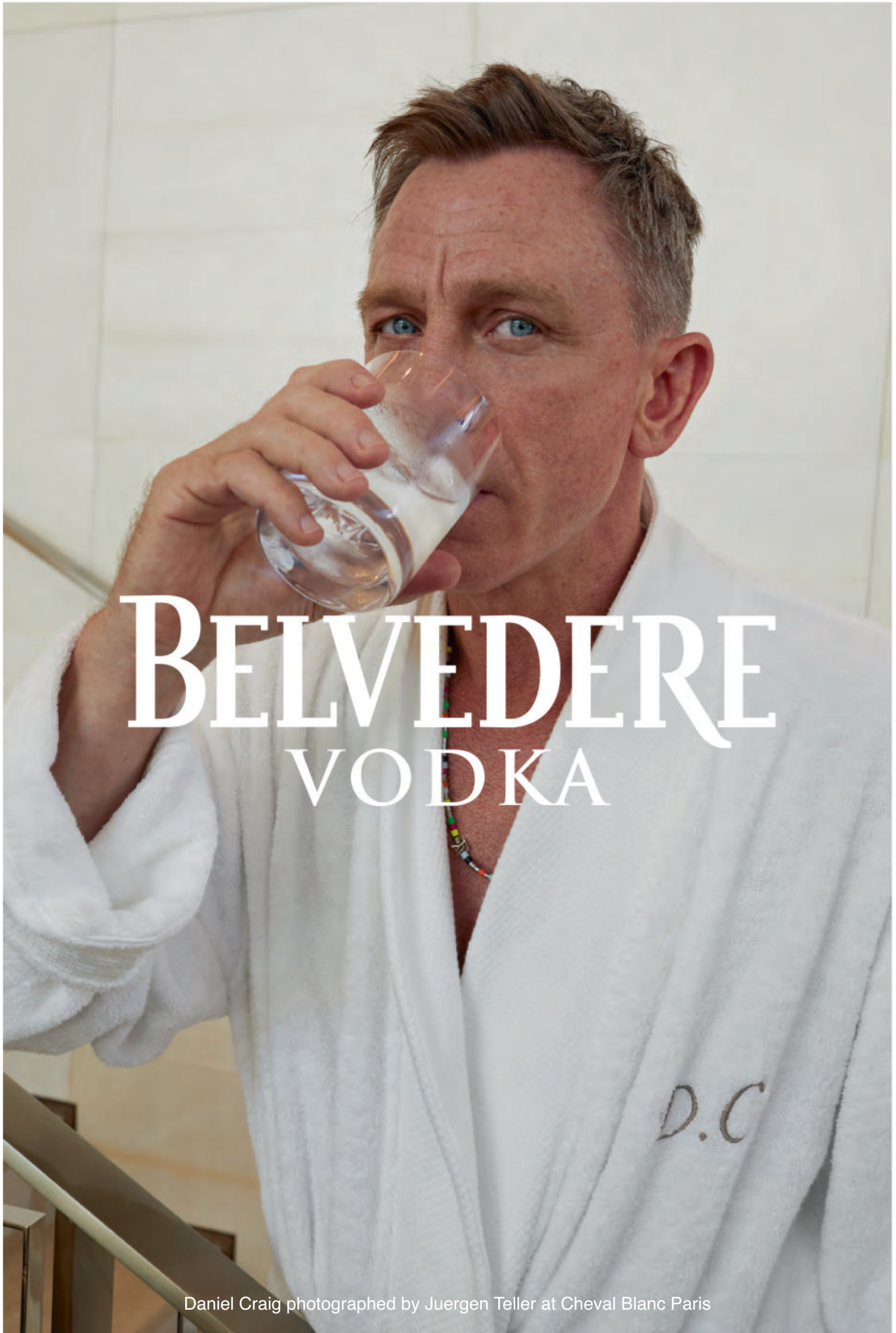
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February

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On the Covers

Photograph by Buzz White. Styling by Angelo Mitakos. Jacket, £1,990, and jumper, £690, by **Givenchy**. Shirt, £1,150, by **Fendi**. Necklace, £190, by **All Blues**. Ring, on necklace, £450, by **Bleue Burnham**. Grooming by Mike O’Gorman. Set design by Prop It. Tailoring by Barbra Kolasinski at Karen Avenell.

GQHQ	Behind the Scenes With the People Who Make GQ
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Contributor



FRANCISCO GARCIA
Writer

Francisco Garcia is a journalist and author. For this February issue, he travelled to Calabria to report on the Italian mafia. “I was prepared for certain things: the ruthlessness and violence, the corruption and despair. But reporting on this very specific story made me realise the sheer scale of the ’Ndrangheta and how powerful this constellation of families and clans from one of Italy’s poorest regions has become over the past half-century.”

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“With my last name,
one must be able to
put together
an elegant yet
simple fit.”



→
CHARLIE JOHNSON
Contributing fashion
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“I like wearing things
that remind
me of vacation.”



←
BRAUNA MARKS
Associate visuals
editor, US GQ
“Don’t let the
handmade skirt fool
you – I’m very much
that person who
heckles referees at
a sporting event.”

JAGUAR



February



For our cover story on Erling Haaland, see page 100.

Shirt, £2,350, and necklace, £695, by **Dolce & Gabbana**. Top, £265, by **MSGM**. Trousers, £625, by **Gant**.
Shoes, £220, by **Duke + Dexter**. Socks, £13, by **Falke**.

February



For our story on Lando Norris, see page 49.
Sweater, price upon request, by **Axel Arigato**.



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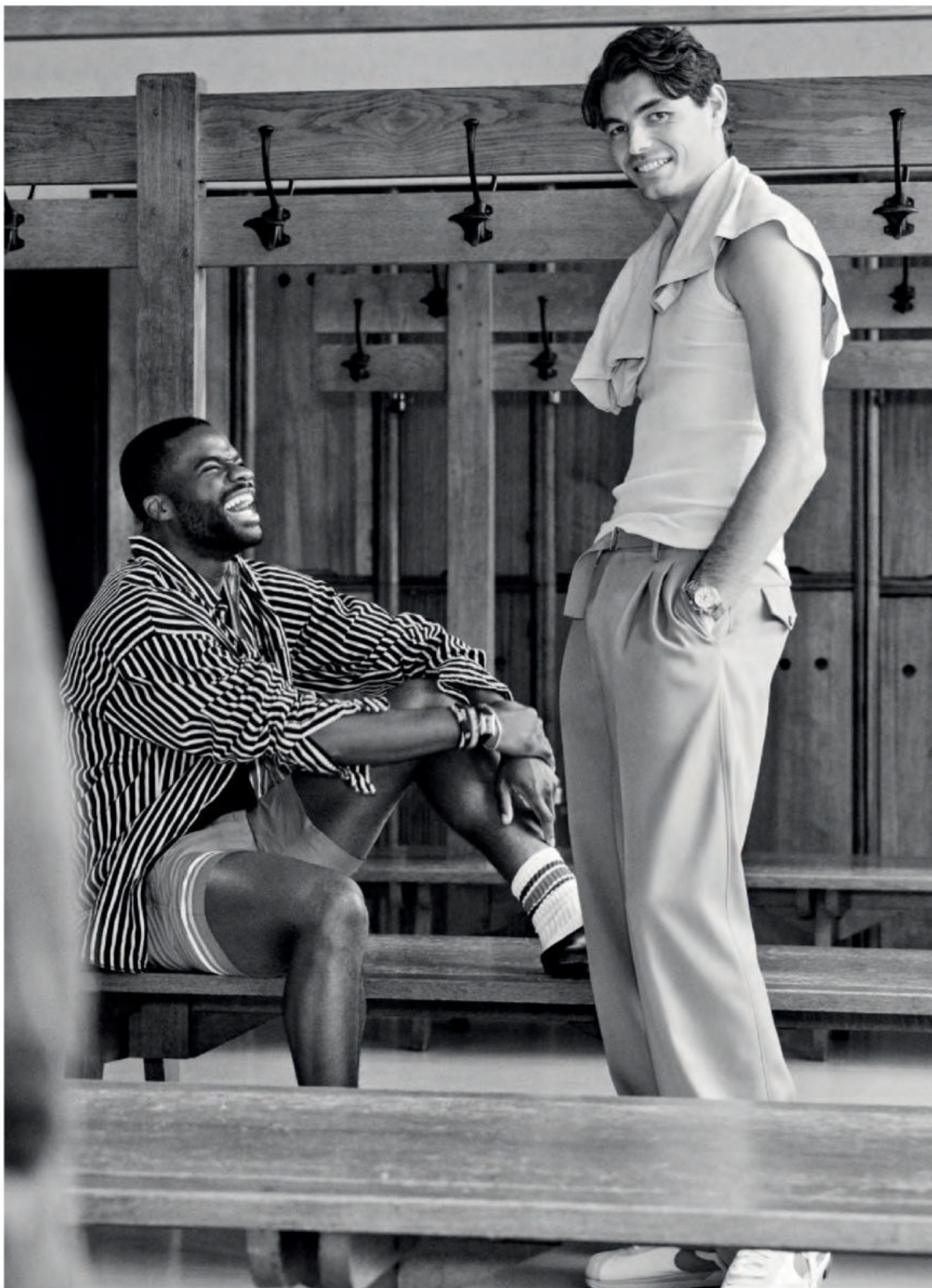
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BOSS

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THE NEW FRAGRANCES



February



For our story on Frances Tiafoe, Taylor Fritz, and the other new superstars of men's tennis, see page 118.

On TIAFOE: Vintage shirt by **Wrangler**. Tank top, price upon request, by **Bottega Veneta**. Shorts, £340, by **Brunello Cucinelli**. Shoes, £485, by **Dries Van Noten**. Stylist's own socks by **Uniqlo**. Watch, £11,200, by **Cartier**. Jewellery, his own.

On FRITZ: T-shirt (worn over shoulders) and watch, his own. Tank top, price upon request, by **Bottega Veneta**. Trousers, £580, by **Lanvin**. Trainers, £165, by **Nike x Sacai**.



Erling Haaland

Pro footballer,
member of the all-star squad



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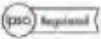
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Don't Have Goals. Build Systems.

IT'S A DANGEROUS time of year for bullshit. When one year turns into another, the hucksters make a pretty penny off of our new year's resolutions: weight-loss fads, exercise miracles, and so on.

And hey, it's also the time of year at which we bullshit ourselves. *I will do X by [date]!*

I'm going to be Y for 100 days straight! I've been there. It feels good. But dopamine is cheap and fleeting. Willpower is a powerful thing, but it only throws the afterburners on what's already in motion – like how having a few drinks can only amplify charisma that actually exists.

Another thing that's dangerous and often bullshit: purchasing books at the airport. That kind of purchase is usually best reserved for pulpy spy thrillers that start at the denouement and then flash back six months. Purchasing non-fiction at the airport is particularly dangerous: most of those books should be Twitter threads at worst, blog posts at best.

However – and this is no bullshit – I purchased James Clear's *Atomic Habits* at the airport a few years ago, and it was a totally transformative read. (To be fair, I bought it on Kindle, which is slightly less dangerous.)

Core to Clear's manifesto is this: forget goals, build systems. Goals don't, on their own, produce results. Systems do. Goals are shiny, sexy, dopamine-spiking, enough to get the wheels turning. Systems are slow, methodical, unsexy – but the only way of producing anything at all. Without systems, it's just... new year, same you.

It's why our cover star, Erling Haaland, with the help of Ole Gunnar Solskjaer, worked for two years to perfect his headed finishes. It's why Haaland and his father Alfie mapped out his potential club moves three, four, five years in advance.

It's why Lando Norris, who is also profiled in our annual *GQ Sports* issue, is keeping one eye laser-focused on the 2024 and 2025 Formula 1 seasons: he knows that those are the years where, if everything is prepared just so, he could win it all for the first time.

There's a stupid amount of pressure compressing each of us right now. There's every chance that 2023 will be even doomier than last year. So there's no better time to work smarter for ourselves, to be more methodical, more tactical, and less reliant on fleeting emotions or moods.

There's this Navy SEAL mantra I've always liked: slow is smooth and smooth is fast. When this year hits its inevitable moments of chaos, I'll lean on that again.

Enjoy the issue. And in the spirit of getting systematic, I asked ChatGPT, the internet's favourite hyperintelligent chatbot, to have a go at writing this month's editor's letter as well.* (Not bad, but I think I'll keep writing them for now.)

Adam Baidawi

DEPUTY GLOBAL
EDITORIAL DIRECTOR

*Exact instructions given to ChatGPT: Write a 400-word *GQ* magazine editor's letter that discusses the benefit of systems over willpower, using specific examples. Link that topic to this month's cover star Erling Haaland, as well as the F1 driver Lando Norris who is also profiled in the issue. Note that this is the annual *GQ Sports* issue. Write a short, snappy headline to go with it.



"Why Systems Trump Willpower: Lessons from Cover Star Erling Haaland and F1 Driver Lando Norris"

Dear readers,

Welcome to the annual *GQ Sports* issue, featuring cover star Erling Haaland and profile subject Lando Norris. These two young, rising stars have much in common, including an unwavering dedication to their respective sports and a focus on continuous improvement.

But there is another factor that sets these athletes apart from their peers: their

understanding of the power of systems over willpower.

Erling Haaland has gained international fame for his scoring record on the soccer field, but it's his rigorous training and nutrition regimen off the field that has allowed him to consistently perform at such a high level. Haaland recognizes that his on-field success is not solely dependent on his own willpower and determination, but rather the result of a systematic approach to his physical and mental preparation.

Similarly, Lando Norris has credited his rapid rise in the competitive world of Formula

1 to his attention to detail and commitment to following a structured training program. Norris understands that success in F1 requires more than just raw talent and a strong will to win – it requires a comprehensive system for constantly improving his skills and staying in top physical condition.

This principle of relying on systems rather than willpower can be applied to all aspects of life, not just sports. In his book *"Atomic Habits,"* James Clear argues that small, incremental changes to our daily routines can lead to significant long-term improvements. By

implementing systems for our habits and behaviors, we can eliminate the need for constant willpower and decision-making, freeing up mental energy to focus on other tasks.

So next time you're trying to achieve a goal, whether it's in your personal or professional life, consider the power of systems over willpower. Take a page from the playbooks of Haaland and Norris, and consider how implementing a structured approach to your endeavors can lead to sustained success.

Sincerely,
[Editor's Name]

CALVIN KLEIN DEFY

THE NEW EAU DE PARFUM



RICHARD MADDEN

#CKDEFY

He's quality on the cycle track and he wears quality off it. Meet Kye Whyte, winner of Britain's first Olympic medal in BMX. By MURRAY CLARK



Gym

Classes

Heroes

MOVE OVER, MAMILS
Kye Whyte takes cycle gear to the next level – and proves that it's very much *not* just for middle-aged men in Lycra.
Top, £695, shorts, £1,835, leggings, £395, trainers, £700, by **Givenchy**.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY RICHARD DOWKER
STYLING BY ITUNU OKE

FEBRUARY 2023 GQ 33



SQUAT SHORTS
Ever tried squatting in a pair of regular shorts? Exactly. But there's good news: **A-Cold-Wall*** has dropped lunge-friendly inseamers that won't split mid-deadlift (£350).

MUSCLE MAGIC
Tired muscles and tight limbs? Enter **Puresport's** CBD balm. Slap it on, rub it in and get lifting (£43).

VEST PRACTICE
London-based designer **Saul Nash** does the fashion end of sportswear, so this vest flies in the gym and gets hypebeasts hot under the collar outside it (£250).

RUNWAY RUNNERS
Yohji Yamamoto is the fashion nerd's fashion brand. But in the ongoing Adidas Y-3 project, it's a sneakerhead's label, too, with trainers that work for a workout – and everything else (£250).

TAKE NOTEN
If anyone is the north star of fashion boys the world over, it's **Dries Van Noten**. Now, cosy boys have joined their ranks, because the don of the Antwerp Six is making some of the weirdest, coolest sweatpants around (£605).

SOCK SOLID
Make sick sneakers sicker still with ankles stamped by the streetwear kings at **Represent** (£45 for three pairs).

HIGH ROLLER
The swoosh not only catches compliments: it speeds up recovery. The stylish ribbed design on this **Nike** recovery ball relieves muscle tension (£35 at Mr Porter).

HIGH AND DRY
Lululemon knows how to stay fresh at the gym, and this moisture-wicking technical underlayer packs the gym drip you actually want (£98).

20:20 VISION
Oakley has gone from Surrey cycling dad to 4am club kid but these glasses have lost none of their style or substance in the transition (£210).

NATURAL STATE
Bolstered by rosemary, sage and eucalyptus, and with a little drop of neutralising zinc, **Aēsop's** all-natural deodorant is a weight class up from the usual turbo himbo spray (£25).

PHANTOM TREAD
Axel Arigato's Marathon shoes give a morning run extra mileage. The thick, shock-absorbing sole makes for a lighter run, and the colourway is achieved by a clever immersion dyeing technique (£270).

WATER LEVEL
Corporate water bottles just don't cut it any more. But **Space Available's**, with its top made from recycled bottle caps, sure does (£120 at Mr Porter).

HARD SHELL

A little bit James Gandolfini, even more Nineties techno raver, **Martine Rose's** shell jacket will add some heat to your cold weather sprints (£500).



LEG UP

Workout gear for the fashion pack comes in the form of drainpipe **JW Anderson** leggings. So join them, stat (£195).

CROUCHING TIGER

Onitsuka Tiger gave a *Kill Bill*-era Uma some serious bounce. Boost your next session in the same way in some of the most iconic sneaks in history (£105).

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MITCH PAYNE
STYLED BY ANGELO MITAKOS AND ITUNU OKE



Whyte Heat

After clinching silver at the Tokyo Olympics, BMXer Kye Whyte is on a colourful road to gold.

By MURRAY CLARK

FOR KYE WHYTE, winning silver was second place to the *actual* Olympics. “Japanese ice cream was the highlight of the whole thing,” he says, after listing the endless choices at the athletes’ food hall. “It was bubblegum strawberry, honestly the best.”

That admission will come as little surprise to fans of the 23-year-old BMXer. He seems to notice the colours in his life. Whyte’s favourite piece from his first GQ shoot? “I really liked the yellow Dior T-shirt. That was good.” His first bike? “Hot pink. It was supposed to be glow-in-the-dark green, but there was dust in the paint, and that was the only thing they had left.” His most recognisable fit: the red, white and blue Team GB strip by Adidas.

Then there’s silver, a colour that feels slightly anaemic to Whyte. During the pandemic, Big Life Events – birthdays, Christmas, scoring his first Olympic medal – didn’t much feel like Big Life Events. “We got to the airport after about eight Covid tests, then it was isolation in the hotel,” he says with a shrug.

“Normally it would be a two-week stay, and everyone parties at the end. That didn’t happen. You just did your event then flew straight home.”



Jacket, £515, by Maison Kitsuné.
Top, £22, leggings, £22, by Gymshark.
Shorts, £245, by Pence 1979.
Socks, stylist’s own.
Trainers, £79, by New Balance.
Watch, £10,850, by Rolex.

Whyte’s track has had a few bumps (or “rollers”, to use proper BMX chat) on the way. Growing up, too, he recalls colours – like the selection box of medications he took as a kid. “I had full-body eczema, and really bad asthma. Four different coloured pumps. But I went around non-stop. As soon as I finished, a couple of pumps, a bit of cream for my skin, and go again.”

And, at 13, a red alert far graver. “I fell off and was in an induced coma. I had a bleed on the brain. Broken jaw. Left side of my cheek was missing.” The atmosphere in the room grows heavy, but is quickly dispelled by a flick of Whyte’s hand. “Ah, I just bounced back. I had to take a year out and lost all my titles, but that was no bother.” He grins.

It’s a textbook example of Whyte’s carefreeness. And yet he’s still a pro, with all of the burning ambition essential to fuelling such an unusual career. “I want to go there and win. When you know you’re winning, only to come second, it’s just... yeah. It is what it is, so I’m training hard.”

Japanese ice cream is pretty tasty, but come Paris 2024, the brightest, sweetest scoop of all would be gold. ❄️

MURRAY CLARK is British GQ’s Senior Style Editor.



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WLTP: 20.1-23.1 kWh/62 miles (324-372 Wh/mile) and CO₂: 0 g/mi. Preliminary figures. Subject to final certification.



LIVING YOUR VEST LIFE

The iron-pumping maniacs behind New York's Y.I.W.O. – that's “Yeah, I Work Out” – specialise in the kind of aggro retro graphics and biceps-baring silhouettes that Arnold would've worn at Gold's Gym in the '70s (£50).

COPPER COAT

The righteous sheen on this boxy **Moschino** jacket is proof that sometimes taking home the bronze still makes you a winner (£1,030).

WARM-UP SET

The embroidery on the bottoms says it all: you really *will* feel **Gucci** in this princely nylon tracksuit (top, £2,900; bottoms, £2,000).

TWO-WAY TROUSERS

Rhude designer Rhuigi Villaseñor has been riffing on tracksuit bottoms for years now, but here he's perfected the form: sporty terry towelling, classic side stripes, zips at the ankles, all on a tailored silhouette (£835).

SLEEK SPECS

Even when the heat is blazing and the sun is glaring, the reflective lenses on these icy sport shades from LA's **Bonnie Clyde** will keep you laser focused on hitting that next PB (£145).

TOUCHDOWN TOP

Our advice for rocking **Diesel**'s sheer man-of-the-match-worthy American football top? Don't skip abs day (£90).

MUG SHOT

The signature cleanser from Hawaiian skin care kings **Koa** is packed with everything your face needs after a brutal workout: Japanese yuzu for toning, green tea to battle wrinkles, and aloe vera to help prevent UV damage (£23).

GET SHORTY

You don't need to be a pugilist to appreciate **Etro**'s elegant take on boxing shorts, fashioned from silk that'll look right at home with a linen shirt and loafers (price upon request).

STOUT SHOES

Don't let the soft pastels fool you: these **Nike** trail runners are encased in waterproof Gore-Tex to help you dominate all manner of terrain in any kind of weather (£145).

FREAKY SNEAKERS

Kiko Kostadinov, fashion's gnarliest mad scientist, has cooked up 2023's single weirdest kicks: old-school bowling shoe uppers set atop bulbous early-noughties running soles, all wrapped up in slime-hued leather (£495).

LUXE LEGGINGS

If the reflective racing stripes cascading across these running tights don't turn people's heads, the jumbo-size **Loewe** logo certainly will (£550).

TWISTED TUNIC
This **Bianca Saunders** cotton turtleneck is stretchy and breathable enough to keep up with you on a chilly morning run – but that transfixing grid print is begging to be paired with your sickest sports jacket (£300).

SEARING SUNGLASSES
When **Louis Vuitton Men's** makes a pair *this* good, it's impossible to deny that neon-tinged wraparounds – the eyewear of baseball players everywhere – are officially back (£610).

HYBRID TROUSERS
These lightweight **Ferragamo** trousers are fully customisable, thanks to zip-up legs and bungee cords along the sides that adjust the shape (£1,415).

LEATHER TRACKSUIT
Since its 1968 debut, **Puma's** iconic T7 tracksuit has been loved by German footballers, Harlem break-dancers, and style-minded folk the world over. Until now, though, it's never been rendered in rich, lush leather (prices upon request).

LUNAR ONE-PIECE
The sculpted, wetsuit-like fit of this **Marine Serre** singlet will highlight your physique; the witchy crescent-moon logo, meanwhile, will highlight your in-the-know cool (£255).

LINKS JACKET
Short-sleeve windbreakers, like this high-neck **Givenchy** number, are the latest thing to make the leap from thing-your-dad-wears-golfing to thing-you-want-to-wear-all-the-time (price upon request).

CHUNKY RUNNERS
Hoka's hulking soles and searing colours are catnip for hardcore runners and serious sneakerheads alike (£150).

PUNCH-DRUNK
A word of advice: if you step into the ring in **Miu Miu** boxing gloves, you best have a mean one-two (£1,200).

BUFF BAG
There's a reason **The North Face** has been cranking out this exact duffel for more than 40 years: it's roomy enough for all your gear, indestructible enough to survive a trek up Everest, and a breeze to haul around thanks to its ergonomic backpack straps (£125).

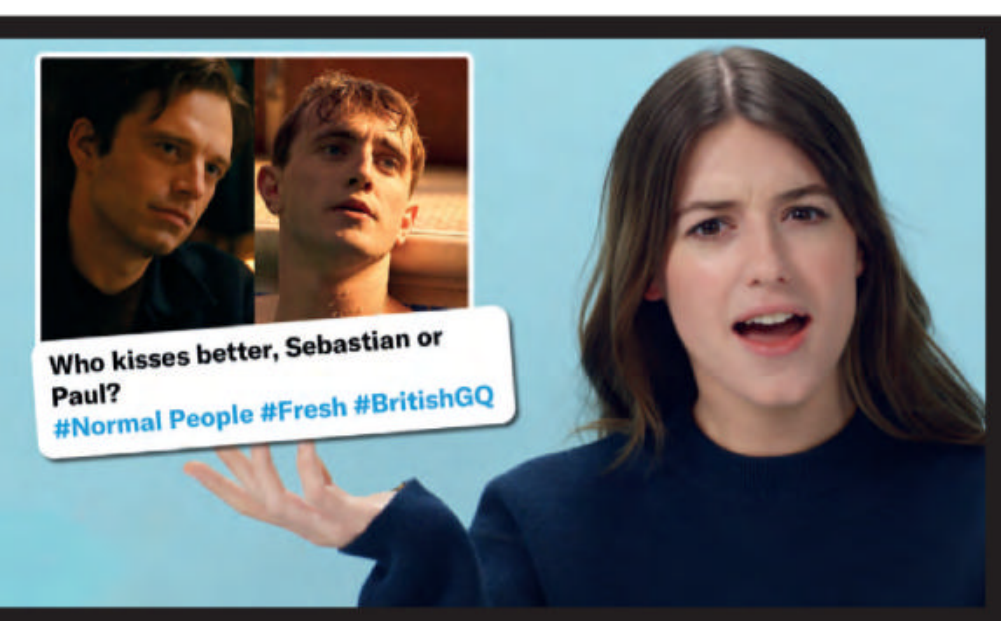
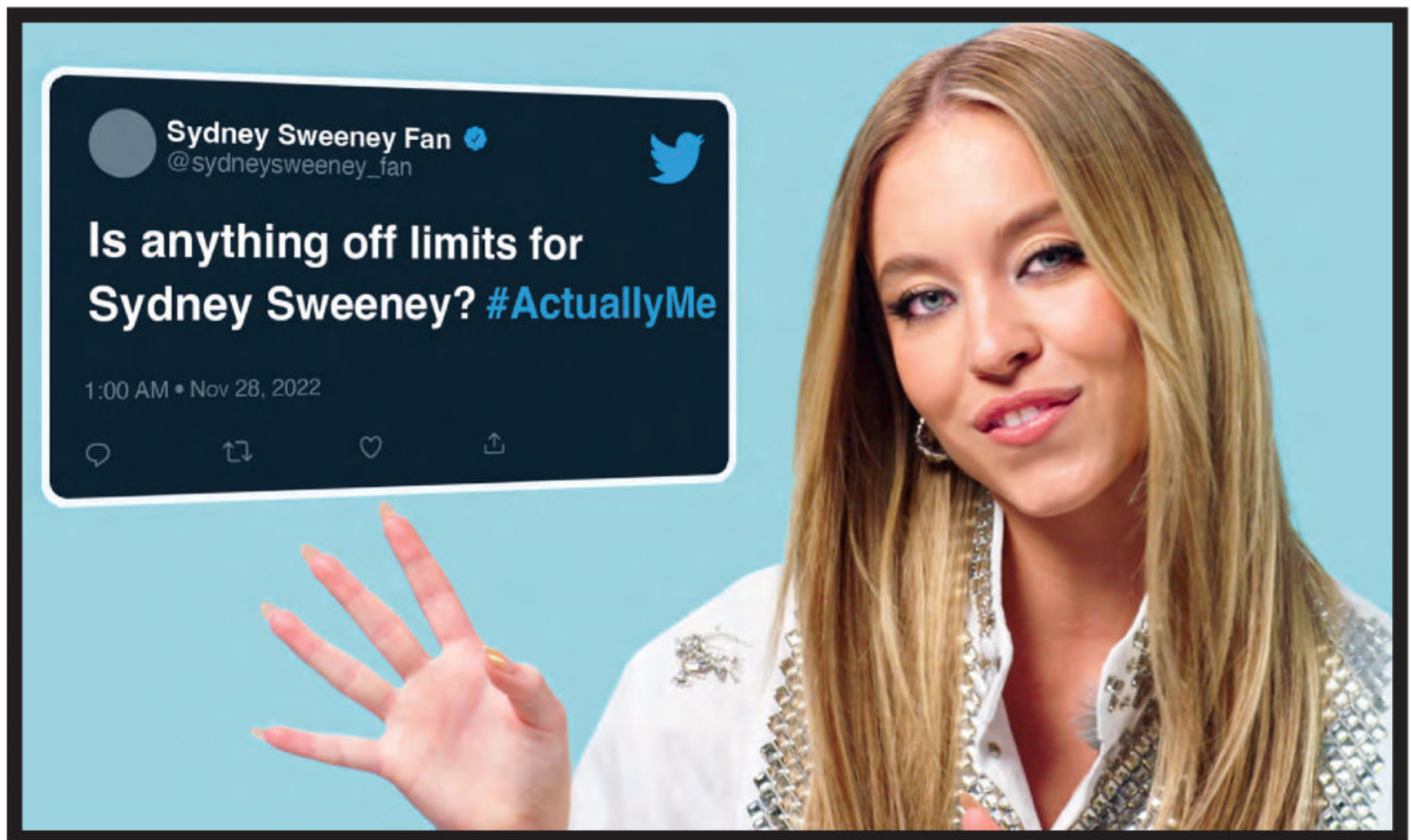
HONEYED TONES
This honeycomb-inspired **Dries Van Noten** vest wouldn't seem out of place at the Tour de France, but it'll look even better worn unzipped with leather jeans at a summer rave (£355).

BLAZING TRAINERS
For its third collab with **Asics**, South Korean label **Andersson Bell** splashed every nook and cranny of the chunky Gel-Sonoma 15-50 shoe with daring, discordant tones (price upon request).

HOOP SHORTS
To truly pull off these swishy **Magnlens** mesh shorts, wear 'em the way Anthony Joshua would: two sizes too big (£85).



Subscribe to British GQ on YouTube for video drops worthy of your feed.



The 18 Greatest Live Sports

Experiences on Earth



FEW THINGS ARE as brain-reorientating or as life-affirming as communally watching the best athletes in the world go at each other's throats: the roaring crowds, the adrenaline rush, the after-parties. After having spent much of the past few years cramped indoors, we scanned the globe to gather the best live sports experiences – some you've heard of, many you probably haven't – that are worthy of your hard-earned credit card miles, no prior fandoms necessary.

ULTRA-TRAIL DU MONT-BLANC *Chamonix, France*

What is it? The toughest and most scenic ultramarathon in the world, it's a 106-mile sufferfest that takes runners up more than 30,000 feet of elevation and through three countries – France, Switzerland, and Italy – all set amid a weeklong late-summer party in the alpine town of Chamonix. **What's the vibe?** "It's Burning Man meets the Tour de France, plus the world's best outdoor-apparel expo," says Topher Gaylord, an 11-time finisher who came runner-up in 2003. **Optimise your experience by...** Getting to town a few days before the start of the race. Book a stay at the ultra-hip La Folie Douce Hôtel overlooking the town centre for convenient access to views of the race and nightly DJ sets.

SURFING AT NAZARÉ *Nazaré, Portugal*

What is it? Simply the best place to watch surfers from all over the world try to conquer the biggest waves on earth. **What's the vibe?** Nazaré is a quaint, biblically named fishing village perched impossibly close to objectively awe-inspiring surf breaks. **Optimise your experience by...** Visiting during the big-wave months (October to March). Get the best view at the

red lighthouse at Praia do Norte, where you can both watch pros battle 100-footers and feel small in comparison to the truly awesome power of nature.

THE MASTERS *Augusta, Georgia, US*

What is it? Golf's most prestigious tournament. A sepia-toned, no-phones-allowed, elaborately stage-managed, moderately airbrushed evocation of golf's glorious past. **What's the vibe?** Genteel. Augusta National Golf Club is basically Disneyland for the power elite. **Optimise your experience by...** Dropping by the pro shop, which is famous for inducing grown men to drop thousands of dollars on logoed merch. What you really want is the folding chair. Stick your business card in the slot on the backrest and drop it at Amen Corner (where the 11th, 12th, and 13th holes converge) first thing in the morning – congratulations, you've claimed your spot for the day.

SUPERCLÁSICO: BOCA JUNIORS VS. RIVER PLATE *Buenos Aires, Argentina*

What is it? The fiercest football rivalry in the world, this annual derby between the two major Buenos Aires teams has bad blood dating back to 1913. Emotions run high,

loyalties deep, and the entire city gets shrouded in tension and electrifying energy in the days before and after the twice-yearly meet.

What's the vibe? *Intense.* So intense that once a guy burned his friend's house down over a Superclásico argument. **Optimise your experience by...** Pre-gaming with a cocktail of Fernet and Coke before you take in the 100ft banners, non-stop chanting, and smoke from flares – dodging riot police afterwards is optional.

THE HANSHIN TIGERS AT KOSHIEEN STADIUM *Nishinomiya, Japan*

What is it? Hardcore baseball at Nishinomiya's Koshien Stadium, the country's oldest ballpark and where the beloved Hanshin Tigers play. Baseball in Japan is like a turbocharged version of America's: the crowds are fanatical, the drums non-stop, and the food is pretty killer too. **What's the vibe?** A very unsober and communal after-hours karaoke sesh. **Optimise your experience by...** Belting out the club's famed fight song, "Rokko Oroshi," along with the crowd, after the Tigers pick up the win. And be sure to stop by the team shop for elite goods; the Tigers have one of the coolest logos in all of sport.

THE DIME GLORY CHALLENGE *Montreal, Canada*

What is it? A skateboarding anti-competition where the best skaters in the world risk life, or at least limb, attempting irreverent, outlandish tricks in the spirit of showmanship. What it lacks in medals, awards, and judges, it more than makes up for in foam pits, fake volcanoes, pyrotechnics, and swords. **What's the vibe?** *Jackass*, but make it French Canadian. **Optimise your experience by...** Joining the crowd at Montreal's Olympic Stadium to egg on some of today's most daring skaters. Then head over to the car park down the road from the Dime store for their killer street party.

Previous page: runner Mathieu Blanchard finishes the Ultra-Trail du Mont-Blanc, 2021.

Below: spectators gather for one of the big jumps at the Red Bull Hardline.





Golfers compete at the 2022 Masters.

TRIPLEMANIA

Mexico City

What is it? Triplemania is Mexico's answer to Wrestlemania – the biggest and baddest annual showcase of *lucha libre*, the wildest and most high-flying form of pro wrestling.

What's the vibe? The operatic flair of a telenovela with holy-shit-ness of live gymnastics. Expect at least one *luchador* to get his mask dramatically torn off. **Optimise your experience by...** Copping your own mask and bootleg tee from one of the dozens of stands outside the arena beforehand.

THE RED BULL HARDLINE

Machynlleth, UK

What is it? Extreme mountain biking against the surreal backdrop of the beautiful Welsh hillsides. **What's the vibe?** Crunchy adrenaline. Backwards baseball caps, Clif bars, Gore-Tex. Prepare to hike. **Optimise your experience by...** Avoiding the massive jump just before the finish line and instead trudging up the hill where the crowd dissipates and racers pull out their most holy-shit mid-air tricks.

MUAY THAI AT RAJADAMNERN STADIUM

Bangkok, Thailand

What is it? Rajadamnern is the place to catch Thai boxing's most elite athletes multiple nights a week

– and it's one of the few places in the country where gambling is legal.

What's the vibe? Bets are collected on the second floor using hand signals, which lends the stadium an air of impropriety: in 2014, then 17-year-old superstar Sangmanee was poisoned before a match with a cocktail of benzodiazepine. (He's fine now.) **Optimise your experience by...** Coughing up 2,000 baht (about £50) to sit ringside, where you can smell the minty Thai oil rubbed on all the fighters.

WIMBLEDON

London, UK

What is it? Do we need to explain? The pinnacle of tennis. Founded in 1877, it's the oldest tennis tournament and the only major still played on grass. **What's the vibe?** While the players are uniformed in white, celebrities in SW19 show off in their biggest fits. (See: David Beckham in 2022, whose brown double-breasted jacket with a brown tie generated its own news cycle.) **Optimise your experience by...** Watching a match or two for cheap on Henman Hill, the grassy bank outside No 1 Court.

THE HAHNENKAMM RACES

Kitzbühel, Austria

What is it? Death-defying World Cup skiing in a medieval mountain town, where the after-parties are as debauched as the course is

dangerous. **What's the vibe?**

Raucous alpine bacchanalia.

Optimise your experience by...

Skiing down the slope parallel to the competitive track and watching the pros whizz by at speeds of over 85mph with 50,000 fellow spectators. Après ski, hit up the notoriously wild blowout at The Londoner pub, where it's traditional for the winner of Saturday's race to take over bartending duties. *Prost!*

COLLEGE AMERICAN FOOTBALL: OLE MISS VS. LSU

Oxford, Mississippi, US

What is it? The granddaddy of tailgates (a US tradition of barbecuing at the back of your vehicle with the door down). The Grove, Mississippi's oak-lined lawn, is a world where the tents have chandeliers and families have held onto their patch of turf for generations. When LSU's rowdy fans invade, two proud Southern cultures collide. **What's the vibe?** Pre-gaming with a gridiron intensity. "From a *Braveheart* standpoint, LSU owns tailgating," says John Currence, the James Beard Award winner whose City Grocery catered Ole Miss tailgates for years. "These guys have rigs with 12 spitfires and they're cooking alligator and gumbo." **Optimise your experience by...** Arriving by 8am and seeking out a tailgate catered by local professionals Grit – smoked beef brisket sliders, fried green tomato BLTs, and jambalaya for a cold day.



Boca Juniors fans celebrating at the Superclásico in Buenos Aires.

PALIO DI SIENA

Siena, Italy

What is it? Twice a summer since the Middle Ages, 10 jockeys have contested this horse race around the central square of beautiful Siena.

What's the vibe? Siena is usually a quiet, conservative place, but this is when the locals go nuts. "It's like a pressure valve," says filmmaker Cosima Spender, whose 2015 film *Palio* captured the spectacle.

Optimise your experience by...

Nabbing a spot by San Martino, the course's famous corner that horses have to round just right; otherwise they'll go careering into a column (one reason the race is unpopular with animal rights activists). Afterwards, follow the crowd. "The winning jockey is paraded out of the square," says Spender. "It's so pagan."

THE NHL WINTER CLASSIC

Various locations, US

What is it? Pro hockey – outdoors! The peculiar alchemy of uncertain weather conditions, hot-cider-sipping crowds, and chippy on-ice action has established it as a wintry spectacle.

What's the vibe? American football meets small-town winter carnival.

Optimise your experience by...

Catching the alumni game, where legends from both teams take to the ice to recapture the old magic.

THE DREW LEAGUE

Los Angeles, US

What is it? The rowdiest hoops on earth crammed inside a high school gym just north of Compton. Find yourself within sneezing distance of basketball royalty: Kevin Durant, Trae Young, LeBron James, and countless others have all been known to drop by the pro-am runs unannounced. **What's the vibe?** The raw street-ball energy of the old AND1 Mixtape Tour. **Optimise your experience by...** Knowing which stars suit up for which Drew team. Since DeMar DeRozan and LeBron technically play for the MMV Cheaters, for example, you can increase your odds of watching one of them dunk on a barista by showing up to a Cheaters game.

TOUR DE FRANCE

France (and its neighbours)

What is it? The apex of cycling. This year the tour celebrates its 110th birthday, with the race starting in Bilbao, Spain, the heart of Basque country, and the final sprint zipping through the massive crowds lining the Champs-Élysées in Paris.

What's the vibe? Twenty-three days of Strava Christmas. **Optimise your experience by...** Enjoying the finish at Paris one more time. With the last leg of the 2024 Tour moving to Nice,

there is no guarantee the iconic finale on the Champs-Élysées will happen again anytime soon.

CHENNAI SUPER KINGS VS. MUMBAI INDIANS

Chennai, India

What is it? India's cricket version of El Clásico. Chennai's century-old MA Chidambaram Stadium is the best place to watch this match thanks to its hallowed stands, redesigned with strategic gaps to allow the fresh ocean breeze to filter in and cool down spectators. **What's the vibe?** Electric. The fans are the most knowledgeable anywhere. **Optimise your experience by...** Two-stepping with the crowd to "Whistle Podu," the Super Kings' earworm of an anthem.

MONACO GRAND PRIX

Monte Carlo

What is it? It's the sexiest event on the Formula 1 calendar. A 78-lap race through the winding, narrow streets of Monte Carlo and La Condamine.

What's the vibe? Glamorous. As Monaco native Charles Leclerc has said, "It's part of the myth of F1."

Optimise your experience by...

Watching from the grandstand by the famous Casino de Monte Carlo, or, if you're willing to spend a little more (or have the right connections), from a yacht in the harbour.

virgin atlantic



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your own
altitude



The Only First Watch You'll Ever Need

GQ's new watch columnist, senior style writer Cam Wolf, makes the case for the funky and inexpensive Seiko 5 Sports series as the ultimate entry point for any aspiring watch collector.

PEOPLE HAVE all kinds of reasons for embarking on the journey of watch-collecting. Some are looking for fashion watches to pair with their best fits. Others want to invest in pieces that will appreciate in both value and prestige. And some, frankly, just want to flex on the 'gram. Regardless of where a budding collector might be headed, the first question they all have is the same: where do I start?

My answer is the Seiko 5 Sports line. These watches tick all the boxes: they're affordable, distinctive, and, despite costing a fraction of the price of most mechanical sports watches, are built to last. The famed Japanese watchmaker launched the 5 Sports line in 1968, and revamped it in 2019 when it released watches across five functionality-driven "styles" – from Suits and Street to Sports – at prices that seem to be missing a zero, dipping below £250 for some models.

For the aspiring collector who has never owned a watch, the attractive price point of a 5 Sports may be all the convincing one needs. And for the burgeoning horologist who already owns a timepiece or two, these watches

come with the history, the quality, the sophisticated design and the functionality that make them every bit as essential as any Swiss brand to a well-rounded collection.

History is always one of the most important factors when considering a collection-worthy watch, and the Seiko 5 Sports collection has stories to tell. The Sportsmatic was allegedly used by special-ops teams in the Vietnam War, and the Speedtimer, now part of a different Seiko collection, was one of the first automatic chronographs to hit the market – a landmark innovation that put it in competition with the Swiss watch industry in the 1960s. Collectors have since bestowed nicknames (the UFO, the Sushi Roll) on some of the funky designs from the early years – watches that today are as unique and recognisable as anything on the auction block.

But what feels most exciting about the 5 Sports line these days is that it's not content to simply lean on its past. The line-up of recent collaborations speaks to the way these watches are pushing into the future and engaging with new and growing cadres of watch-lovers. Those partners include prep purveyor Rowing Blazers, the

streetwear brand Huf, and even Queen guitarist Brian May. In 2021, Seiko released a gold-faced model designed by fans, chosen from more than 48,000 submissions – helpful proof of its sizable community of devotees.

That club of Seiko 5 Sports owners is loaded with athletes and entertainers too, many of whom are noted aficionados of high horology – guys like comedian Ronny Chieng, former NBA player J.J. Redick and actor Daniel Dae Kim. "You don't have to be a millionaire to enjoy watch-collecting," says Dae Kim. "My dad had a Seiko Speedtimer 5 Sports, and since then they've always had a special place in my heart."

Ronny Chieng points out that this is a watch worn by both Bruce Lee and James Bond, a fact that underscores Seiko 5's parallels with the story of Asians in America thus far. "[They're] elegantly made, with superlative performance, durability, and an underappreciated heritage," Chieng says. "This is what I think of when I wear my Seiko 5s."

The Seiko 5 Sports line might be best known as an affordable option, but collectors aren't sacrificing quality, durability, history, or even celebrity cosigns in buying one. Yes, these are great watches to start with, but the Seiko 5 line is so deep with interesting watches that you could – and many do – spend a lifetime collecting them.

From left: the Seiko 5 Sports line's tangerine number shows off outrageous design, the Speedtimer made watch history as one of the first automatic chronographs on the market, and the Sportsmatic boasts a killer military association.

1971 SEIKO 6119-6400 "SAUCER" SPORTS DIVER; COURTESY OF DC VINTAGE WATCHES. 1973 SEIKO 6138-0011 YACHTMAN; COURTESY OF SEIKO. 1960S SEIKO SPORTSMATIC 5 REF. 6619-8060 "MACY-SOG"; COURTESY OF HODINKEE.



Scent Messages

Boss Bottled has long been in our rotation – and its new formula sends a sexed-up signal.

OUT THERE IN the animal kingdom, pheromones can cause all sorts of behaviours, the most notable being unbridled horniness. As it stands, science is yet to pinpoint that exact sex pheromone in us humans.

However, Boss Bottled's new flavour, The Scent Magnetic, comes pretty

close. Stronger and longer-lasting than the 2015 classic we've loved for some time, this is an amber-and-leather revamp, with notes of maninka fruit (a sweet berry mostly used in cooking), hay, honey and vanilla. It's punchy.

And, fragrance-wise, that sort of statement can work. A joint study

by Avon and perfumers Firmenich found that 64 per cent of its sample group said that a partner's choice of scent can make them more attractive. After all, what are we but animals with good manners? And now, with Boss Bottled, even better pheromones. —ZAK MAOUI

Boss The Scent Magnetic, £89 for 100ml. boss.com

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Lando Norris Is Coming in Hot



The nicest guy in Formula 1 and the breakout star of *Drive To Survive* has sped through the youth ranks to lead a team as McLaren's new first driver. Can he take pole? By TOM WARD

STYLING ASSISTANT, MELISSA EWING. GROOMING, PAUL DONOVAN.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY THOMAS CHÉNÉ
STYLED BY ITUNU OKE

FEBRUARY 2023 GQ 49



THE DAY'S MOTORING

THE DAY'S MOTORING begins with smoke. Lots of smoke, billowing across both lanes, the yellow headlights of other vehicles all that is visible through the cloud. The smell of burning permeates the crisp December air. There's a sense that things have gone suddenly and drastically wrong. The drivers behind back off to give the car space, not entirely sure if it will come safely to a stop, or explode. The driver pulls in and confers with a mechanic. The cause of the plumes is undetermined; driver ineptitude is suspected.

It is not Lando Norris behind the wheel but me, on the M23, en route to meet him. "It's just a sad feeling," Norris says when I explain the reason I'm late. He lends a sympathetic ear. As one of the best Formula 1 drivers on the planet, he has suffered his own fair share of car trouble. There's that time he called his start at the 2020 Turkish Grand Prix the "worst start of anyone's career ever" (after starting 14th, he still bagged the race's fastest time on the final lap), or that time he was caught flipping off his own car on live TV after a difficult corner during lap 35 of the Austrian Grand Prix.

But for Norris at least, smoke is rare. "Generally, if it's smoke, it's something quite bad," he laughs. "If it's on a race day, and through no fault of my own the engine lets go when everyone's put so much work in... yeah, it's such a big letdown to not be able to finish the race." I'm embarrassed, but Norris is reassuring. "That's part of racing," he tells me. "It happens to every driver at some point. It's happened to Lewis, it's happened to Lando."

Norris is being modest. He's not "every driver", but one of the fastest drivers alive – a fact that will see him take on the role of McLaren's lead driver at the start of the 2023 season in March. It's a significant milestone for Norris, who, over six years with McLaren, has served a comprehensive apprenticeship. "I was patient, but I always felt like I wanted to be ahead of where I was," he admits of his time spent first as a bench-warmer, then as second driver to Carlos Sainz and Daniel Ricciardo.

Not that it's in Norris's nature to complain. At least publicly, he presents his time spent absorbing everything

F1 could throw at him as necessary preparation. "I've always hated to use 'experience' as an excuse," he says. "I never wanted to say, 'He beat me today because of experience.' I dreaded that. But you can't prepare for every single thing in the world in that first race, and you realise that with time that you do gain experience and you make fewer mistakes."

WE'RE SPEAKING AT the McLaren Technology Centre outside of Woking, Surrey, a 50-hectare campus of gently curving glass and steel set among artificial lakes and frost-clad silver birches. Designed by British architect Norman Foster at an estimated cost of £300 million, it acts as the home base for all 800 McLaren employees, including the McLaren Racing staff. Every McLaren F1 car is assembled on site and tested in McLaren's own wind tunnel. (If Elon Musk were looking to relocate, any decent estate agent would be remiss not to point him in McLaren's direction.) When Norris's new contract with McLaren is up for renewal in 2025, it will have been his base for close to a decade. Between now and then, the hope among all at McLaren is that Lando's winning streak will continue to pick up speed.

I meet Lando's publicist at a domed glass building a bit like a futuristic summerhouse, the entrance to McLaren's OKX Thought Leadership Centre. I'm led underground through sweeping white tunnels that house some of the most famous cars in F1 history: there's the 1974 M23, the first championship-winning McLaren. Next to it is the 1988 MP4/4, Ayrton Senna's first championship-winning car, and statistically the most successful F1 car in history. Trophy cabinets line the walls, with silver and gold cups, plates and assorted trinkets shining like the spoils of war. Norris bounds down the corridor. "I'd like to get one of those," he says, pointing at a driver's championship trophy. It's an accolade firmly at the top of Norris's to-do list; while he has claimed six podiums in Formula 1 as second driver, so far first place has eluded him.

The first thing that strikes you is just how handsome Norris is. Raised near Bristol to a British father and Belgian mother, he is tanned, with reassuring hazel eyes, a foam of dark brown hair brushed up from his forehead, and brows as striking as his jawline. Not that Norris, at 23, takes his good looks too seriously. "I don't mind if people see me [as handsome] but I

PREVIOUS PAGE
Jacket, £770,
by **Issey Miyake**.
Sweater, £270,
trousers, £450,
by **Ami**.
Trainers, £210,
by **Axel Arigato**.
Watch, his own,
by **Richard Mille**.

THIS PAGE
Top, bracelets,
his own. Watch,
his own, by
Richard Mille.





Jacket,
£7,900, by
Louis Vuitton.

never think of myself like that,” he says, physically scrunching himself into the brown leather seat of the subterranean theatre where we’re speaking, which looks like where Batman might come to catch up on Now TV.

Norris is wearing a dark T-shirt, a navy jumper, trousers and white K-Swiss trainers: his uniform of choice when a hoodie isn’t available. Perhaps due to his packed travel schedule, his accent is oddly international, an Oceanic compression to his vowels. His frame is necessarily slight for his profession, and an assortment of beads and leather bangles adorn his wrist. On the seat between us sits an elegant but unshowy pair of Gentle Monster sunglasses. He’s quick to stress that his reliance on sunglasses isn’t a flex (Norris would hate you to think he’s angling for attention); their near-imperceptible tint helps to combat the

“You can’t prepare for every single thing in the world in that first race, and with time, you do gain experience.”

headaches he suffers in bright light. Despite racing multi-million pound cars at speeds in excess of 200mph for a living – perhaps one of the (both literally and figuratively) loudest flexes possible – he describes himself as quiet and “chill.”

His reputation for shyness is well noted, although McLaren CEO Zak Brown tells me Norris has started to come out of his shell. “I think we get the best out of him; he’s more talkative and engaged,” Brown tells me, over Zoom. “He’s able to let his hair down. It’s like family.” Like a good

leader-in-waiting, Norris goes the extra mile to boost team morale, often helping the mechanics pack down post-race – this is after battling forces of up to 6Gs for a minimum of 90 minutes and losing (as Lewis Hamilton once estimated) up to 4.5kg per race.

Next season he’ll also serve as mentor to McLaren’s 21-year-old Formula 2 champion Oscar Piastri. “It’s a new situation,” Norris observes, but explains that he doesn’t think taking charge will change his approach, except for the fact that he’ll be required to communicate with the team more while on the track.

Norris may prefer to let his driving speak for him, but as someone set to carry the future of his team on his shoulders – not to mention someone whose TikTok videos are seen by more than a million people – he’s long since accepted that public scrutiny is part of



the job. There's also the small matter of *Formula 1: Drive To Survive*, Netflix's hugely popular F1 documentary, which is largely credited with expanding the sport's audience, both in the UK and abroad. When season four debuted last March, Norris found himself thrust further into the spotlight over the course of episodes dealing with the 2021 World Championship, Daniel Ricciardo's first season as McLaren's first driver.

Much was made of the supposed rivalry between Norris and Ricciardo, and Norris's apparent lack of sympathy when Ricciardo was shown to be struggling to adapt to his new car. There's a scene in episode five when, after repeatedly outperforming Ricciardo, Norris finds himself behind his teammate and asks his crew to radio Ricciardo to hurry up; he's driving too slow. In the same episode, the two argue over what exactly constitutes a crash. It's hilarious and uncomfortable in equal measure.

Norris has spoken out about the series, arguing that creative editing was used to ramp up the tension. "Carlos and I get on extremely well. I kind of grew up with him," he explains. "Daniel I got on with pretty well. He and I were the perfect competitors: we hated beating each other like we hated getting beat by one another." (Ricciardo has also refuted rumours of bad blood, telling Channel 4 that he felt no tension with Norris.)

"Away from the track we respected each other massively," Norris says. "I keep it separate; I can be the biggest competitor I need to be on the race track, but I can also respect and be good mates with other people."

Drive To Survive hasn't hurt Norris's image. On the contrary, he ended 2021 by being named the most popular driver among female and Gen-Z fans, following an 187-country, 150,000-person F1 fan survey. "I love it, especially if it's a fan-voted thing," he says. "It's just awesome to read, as a normal guy, that there's so many people that support me." He offers an embarrassed smile. "But it wouldn't change the way I approach things or change who I am, or be a big ego-booster. I try not to think about it too much."

Part of Norris's appeal seems to be that he really doesn't think about it too much. Gone are the days of hard-partying bad-boy drivers like James Hunt. Today, Norris navigates fame



by being unapologetically himself. Whether he's streaming his golf rounds and Halo matches online (he has his own gaming company, Quadrant) or joking with fans in the paddock, he comes across like the kid your mum might ask to make sure things don't get out of hand at a sleepover. Nice, modest, if a bit sulky; in a 2020 Sky Sports video, he and Sainz answer questions while driving a McLaren 720S around a track. Norris admonishes Sainz for driving too fast, reminding him that "This is someone's car!"

Despite the occasional huff, Brown praises Norris as a calm and detached driver, whether he's waiting to make his debut as first driver or racing against his heroes. "When he first went up against Fernando Alonso it was like another day at the office," Brown laughs. "I think that calmness and coolness is why he's so consistent."

Sweater, £270, by **Ami**. Watch, his own, by **Richard Mille**. Bracelets, his own.

It's because of this coolness that things like Norris giving his car the middle finger or arguing a front-end bump isn't a crash are so endearing; they aren't temper tantrums, just very slight – and human – displays of exasperation. But even Lando Norris has his faults. "What frustrates me about Lando?" Brown muses. "He's been five minutes late more than once. If we're supposed to leave at 8.00, it might be 8.07. The great thing about him is he is very honest and owns everything. And he's definitely improved."

IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO climb to pole position on the call sheet without dedicating some serious years to racing. Even so, Norris took a circular route to the top. Growing up in Yeovil, he first tried horse riding, which quickly morphed into quad biking and then, as per his idol Valentino Rossi, Moto GP.

It wasn't until his father took him to watch the British Kart Championships at the age of seven that Norris first considered a career in racing on four wheels. He dedicated himself to the sport, becoming the youngest ever World Karting Champion at 14. "I'm a competitive guy, so if I can beat other drivers in whatever it is, that's just an added bonus," Norris shrugs. He left school at 16 without taking his exams to focus on racing. He soon made the leap to Formula 3, then Formula 2 – and he kept winning.

"He had pretty much won everything he'd ever sat in at a very young age, and in his first time doing it," Brown explains of his decision to sign Norris to McLaren in 2017. "All of that means he's an extremely special talent."

When Norris debuted on the track as back-up to Carlos Sainz at the Australian Grand Prix in 2019, at the age of 19, he did so as Britain's youngest ever F1 driver. He claimed his first podium the following year, coming third at the Austrian Grand Prix. In 2021 he won his best result to date, second place behind Ricciardo at Monza. It was his most triumphant season so far, and culminated in his being named the Autosport Awards British Competition Driver of the Year 2021. Although he finished 7th in the 2022

season, ESPN ranks Norris as the second best driver in the world, behind Max Verstappen, noting his consistency and his position as the only driver outside of the top three teams to bag a podium.

Brown puts Norris's success down to natural talent and hard work, but diligence undoubtedly plays a role. Norris has the energy and enthusiasm of someone eager to hone their craft. He used to live "like three minutes away" from the McLaren base, but now resides in Monaco, flying in and out nearly every week during the season. Around races he'll spend time in the simulator and join meetings about car development or how he can improve himself as a driver. He may have signed a multi-year contract to race as McLaren's number one, but when it comes down to the wire, his position is dependent on his ability to win races. Norris knows this. "I love to listen," he explains. "It might not be something I'm necessarily giving input on, but because I love racing, the more I can know about, that's a good thing. I'm a perfectionist. I try as hard as I can to be a better driver."

This hunger for knowledge has given Norris a technical edge. "He knows how to get the best out of a race car and put the car to its limits," Brown

explains. "He's also able to very articulately convey what that car is doing, because he has such a good feel for it; his technical feedback is excellent."

"I think I'm a fair loser, but I've always been a guy who's very harsh on myself. I'm very critical of my own performance," Norris explains. "I always think, *What could I have done better?* And then, *What could the team have done better?*"

It's one thing for a driver to be harsh on themselves, but another thing entirely to deal with backlash from toxic F1 fans. Norris's relationship with Portuguese model Luisinha Oliveira ended in September, and he has spoken about them both receiving death threats online. Before that, in October 2021, he appeared on ITV show *This Morning* to talk about the immense pressure of being a famous sports person. "I didn't need to do that," Norris says defensively. "It was a choice [to speak about mental health], because I struggled quite a bit with it in 2019 and 2020."

That pressure, from fans and the media, was new to Norris – at least in its intensity. "I just didn't know how to deal with it," he explains. "I kept all of it inside and it really hurt my self-belief and self-confidence, which got to an all-time low. I doubted myself: 'Am I good enough to be in Formula 1? Can I come back from this?'"

His manager put him in touch with a mental health coach, but Norris still experiences online negativity. Thankfully, he says he has learned how to stay away from social media and deal with negative feelings, and seems to be in a much better place. "You're never going to please everyone," he rationalises. "There are people that support you and people that don't... I know I'm doing the best I can."

Conversely, through the challenge of speaking out about mental health, Norris has experienced some of the most uplifting moments of his career, after fans shared their own struggles. "A few people said that I had saved their life," Norris says, his voice wavering. "That hits you pretty hard."

Sweater (price upon request), by **Axel Arigato**. Jeans, £295, by **Nanushka**.



"I doubted myself: 'Am I good enough to be in Formula 1? Can I come back from this?'"



On the lighter side of the internet, a robust meme culture serves to boost the team spirit between drivers. The oldest Norris meme, from 2017 after a crash prevented him from becoming the FIA European Formula 3 champion, depicts him sitting dejectedly on the ground, head bowed, his helmet beside him. Another depicts a more recent, red-eyed, post-race Norris, with the caption “Holding back tears rn”. The subtext – Norris as a driver long awaiting his shot – is clear. The culture is indicative of the respect most drivers share. The likes of Max Verstappen and Lewis Hamilton may maintain an inimical relationship, but it’s difficult to picture the infamous rivalries of old – James Hunt and Niki Lauda spring to mind – sharing memes during the off-season.

Away from the track, Norris’s two central hobbies, golf and photography, provide static counter-balances to his high-octane day job. Like racing, success in both resides in the details. Far from distractions, Norris sees his hobbies as a way to enrich his very limited time off, something to help him “still enjoy a bit of my life away from a racetrack.”

“We have a ton of fun, just ribbing each other the entire time,” Brown says of his golfing exploits with Norris. “He’s a good golfer, when he hits it straight,” he laughs. “You can see the talent is there, but he’s only in his second season. He’s rapidly getting quicker and better with his hand-eye coordination... [he’ll] be a proper golfer in not too long.”

MCLAREN HAS A long and winning history (183 total race wins, 12 Drivers’ Championships and 8 Constructors’ Championships, to be precise). Many of the best drivers in history have raced for them: Lauda, Senna, Häkkinen, Coulthard, Button, Hamilton. However, among fans, there is the belief that McLaren has lost some of that magic. Having not won a WWC title (ie. won an entire season) since 1998, and coming 4th and 5th in 2021 and 2022, McLaren has recently been positioned as “the best of the rest” behind Red Bull, Ferrari, and Mercedes.

Fans believe Norris has every chance of bringing McLaren a title, if only he is given the machinery to back him up. A few days after our conversation, Norris makes headlines when he



“I know I need to be at the absolute top of my game in those years.”

Jacket, £3,900, by **Hermès**.
T-shirt, £55, by **Vince**.

claims that his 2022 McLaren MCL36 is the “furthest away from what [he wants]” in a race car, indicating a preference for speed over comfort. Brown is aware of the issues, but is adamant that once Norris has the right set of wheels, he will go all the way. “I think he’s got another ten to 15 years ahead of him,” Brown tells me. “I think as long as we can get him a car, he’ll be a world champion.”

It’s redundant to state that Norris wants to become the best driver in the world – no one dedicates their life to what is probably the most dangerous sport in the world to continue coming second. Yet Norris is surprisingly candid in admitting that while he thinks he has a good chance of winning a race this year, his best chance

at a championship win won’t come until 2024, or, more likely, 2025. “With everything I’ve learned, maybe I could win a race, but I’m unlikely to win a championship until possibly that time,” he says. “I know I need to be at the absolute top of my game in those years.” Machinery aside, all that really needs to happen for Norris to succeed is for him to stay the course.

“He takes the things that he needs to take seriously, very seriously,” Brown explains. “But he also knows that we’re in a fun business, racing cars.”

This might not be Norris’s season. It might not even be next season. But he’s confident that losses – like breakdowns – are just part of learning. The key thing is to get back behind the wheel and keep going. “I hate losing,” Norris says. “But losing gives me the drive to figure it out and do a better job next time.” ❧

TOM WARD is a journalist and novelist based in Brighton.

GQ HYPE

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Not Your Average Christmas Party

We bade 2022 farewell with killer sounds and stylish company. By REBECCA DOLAN

GQ ROUNDED OUT 2022 with a not-so-traditional Christmas lunch, trading the turkey and carols for Portuguese tapas, Belvedere vodka, Penfolds wine, A by Arras and R&B hits. We held our festive fête – co-hosted by BMW, to mark the release of its XM – at Henrique Sá Pessoa’s new restaurant JOIA, overlooking Battersea Power Station. We were joined by a host of talented friends, including Maxim Baldry, Munroe Bergdorf, Amelia Dimoldenberg, and *Industry*’s Harry Lawtey. The Grammy-nominated Mahalia drew goosebumps with her performances of “Simmer” and “Grateful.” Even the Christmas crackers were special this year – five lucky guests received a voucher for a week-long BMW XM test drive hidden in theirs. One lucky winner? Maya Jama, who was thrilled, is using it as new impetus to finally learn to drive.



Clockwise from top left: Amelia Dimoldenberg; Raye, Maya Jama, Tara Kumar, Mahalia; Harry Trevaldwyn and Sylvia Briggs; Harry Lawtey, GQ’s Adam Baidawi, Munroe Bergdorf; Bimini with the BMW XM; A by Arras at JOIA.



Clockwise from top: Munroe Bergdorf; Nicholas Daley and CKTRL; Maxim Baldry.



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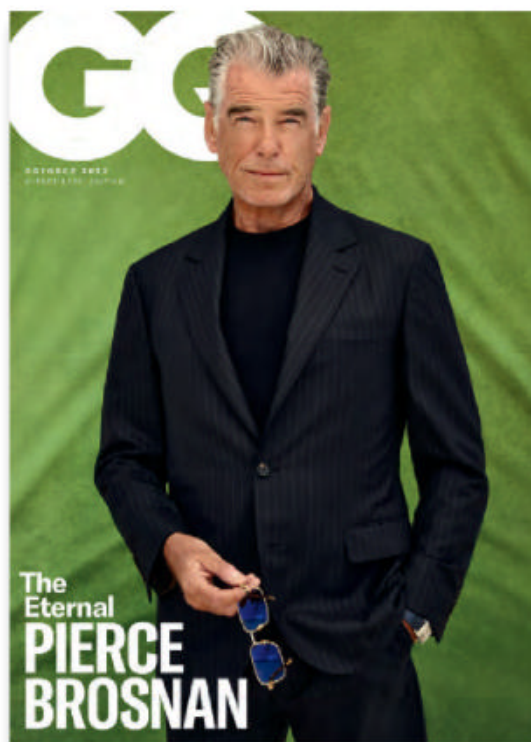
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Unwarmed



PHOTOGRAPHS BY
JULIUS FRAZER
STYLED BY
BRANDON TAN

MMA can be a brutal sport – all hyper-masc bravado and overcompensation. Then comes Israel Adesanya, a talent who can disarm you as quick as a spin-kick.
By CHRIS GAYOMALI



ISRAEL ADESANYA, former UFC middle-weight champion, is the most beautiful striker the sport has ever seen. Even

at the highest level, the vast majority of MMA fights tend to be sloppy and hard to watch; by the third round, punches and kicks flop through the air like you're watching a battle between inflatable tube men inviting you to take advantage of low introductory APRs. Adesanya, on the other hand, is precise. Surgical. At a lithe 6ft 4in, he moves with the fluidity of a Tekken character and possesses the hip mobility of a newborn baby. His kicks will flare up at one angle only to radically change trajectory at the last second, tracing an arc around your guard to smack you in the neck. He flows from one uncanny movement into the next, as if floating. If MMA – a chaotic, gruesome, theatrical sport – is balletic violence, Adesanya is prima assoluta.

One secret to his groovy mechanics? The 2005 David LaChapelle documentary *Rize*, about an aggressive style of hip hop dance called crumping, which, when it came out, inspired young Izzy to dance. “Something about crump just spoke to my spirit,” says Adesanya, “that rawness.” It’s his willingness to borrow from different disciplines that holds the key to his 23-2 MMA record, one of the things that sets him apart from his peers. “Flow, creativity, and openmindedness,” he says. “To this day, I don’t care if you’ve trained for two years. If you show me something interesting, I’m like, yeah, I’ll try it.”

It’s a cold October morning in New York, a few days before his UFC 281 championship fight with his old foe Alex Pereira, when Adesanya, 33, and I sit in a lounge outside the photography studio to chat, his bodyguard not far away. (“My security’s not for my protection,” says Adesanya. “It’s for other people.”) In person he reads as taller than his listed height suggests, with broad shoulders and disproportionately long, sturdy feet, like he could wear trainer socks as no-shows. He rolls onto set with a gaggle of friends from his native New Zealand, one of whom is recording everything for Adesanya’s YouTube channel, *FreestyleBender* – a play on his nickname – where he “reacts to insane” UFC cards and offers free game tips, like detailed tutorials breaking down his own techniques.

Gilet, £2,100, by **Louis Vuitton Men’s**. Trousers, £855, by **Rick Owens**. Headband (price upon request), by **Puma**. Necklaces, from top, £75, by **Vitaly**, stylist’s own, his own. Earring, his own. Grills, his own, by **Ben Baller**.

That Adesanya is a professional fighter-turned-content creator in an ecosystem where content creators are reinventing themselves as fighters is instructive, because Adesanya represents something both aberrational and seemingly inevitable. In the often-regressive world of the UFC, Adesanya is a truly modern athlete – a thoughtful, funny, pearls-and-sneakers-wearing millennial who blurs whatever distinctions might still remain between jocks and nerds. An Izzy phrase like “I opened the fifth gate like Rock Lee” might as well read as ancient Babylonian to anyone born before 1985, but to a large subset of anime-fluent millennials and zoomers, it’s not only perfectly legible, but succinctly captures Adesanya’s whole vibe.

Adesanya was born in Nigeria, the oldest of five brothers and sisters. His father was an accountant, his mother a nurse. The family briefly moved to Ghana before they put down roots in New Zealand, where Adesanya was one of the few Black kids in his class.

He wasn’t much of an athlete. Tall and skinny, but he sucked at basketball and football. He took a little bit of tae-kwondo as an adolescent, but what he really excelled at was table tennis, which he picked up in Accra. “That hand-eye coordination,” he says.

Adesanya really started to come into his own at high school. Particularly after he decided to try out for the school talent show by dancing to “Wanna Be Startin’ Somethin’” by Michael Jackson. “It’s a long song and I danced the whole thing,” says Adesanya. “And, uh, I shouldn’t have, in hindsight. I definitely should have cut it short. But I didn’t know how to perform or have stage presence. So I just got on stage and then people were like, ‘The fuck is he doing on stage? What are you going to do?’”

And then, in a moment of spontaneity, Adesanya hit a wave with his body. Energy flowing into his fingertips, cresting through his arms and shoulders, and then out the other side. The people who were privy to his audition were blown away, and in that moment,



Adesanya realised that he could use his body to change how other people felt about him. That he could use his body to perform. “I could move them and make them react to what I was doing,” he says.

He performed in the actual talent show a week later, and ended up winning the whole thing. “I killed that one,” says Adesanya. “Won a hundred bucks.”

When he turned 18, he watched a movie that would change the trajectory of his life: *Ong-Bak*, the cult martial arts film from Thailand starring Tony Jaa. Unlike the elegantly choreographed fight scenes in the wuxia films coming out of Shanghai, Jaa brought a brutal realism to the screen thanks to his background in muay Thai, using knees, elbows and leg kicks to beat opponents goofy.

Adesanya was enamoured by Jaa’s hardness. He researched a local muay Thai gym and attended his first class, where it was quickly revealed that he was a natural. “The coach there was looking at me because he held the kick shield, and he wanted me to round-house kick it,” explains Adesanya. So

Adesanya is a truly modern athlete – a thoughtful, funny millennial who blurs the distinctions between jocks and nerds.

he kicked it. The coach’s face lit up like he’d just struck gold. “And I remember he was like, ‘Again.’”

Most practitioners train for two or three years before competing, before taking their first fight. Adesanya took one just six weeks later – and won. His fighting career took off from there. He’d spend hours on YouTube, studying the sport’s legends like Buakaw – particularly a highlight reel titled “The Dog from Bangkok” – and other kickboxers like Thiago Alves, who was in the UFC, and Ray Sefo in K1. Adesanya would soon spend the next decade-plus of his career dominating the kickboxing world. He’d amass a record of 75 wins and five losses – the two most significant defeats coming at the hands of his nemesis Alex Pereira, the “Poatan.” The mountain. The unconquered.

Pereira, an indigenous fighter from Brazil, is a formidable opponent for Adesanya. On paper he’s just as tall and long, at 6ft 4in, but is somehow much larger. He walks around at 105kg, and, over the course of a few weeks in fight camp, somehow pulls off an extreme weight cut down to middleweight at 84kg before rehydrating for the fight.



OPENING PAGE
Gilet, £2,100, by **Louis Vuitton**
Men’s T-shirt, £25, by **Puma**
Jeans, £1,900, by **Diesel**. Belt, £400, by **Moschino**.
Sunglasses, £465, by **Balenciaga**.
Earring, his own.
Necklace, £75, by **Vitaly**. Gloves, his own, by **Engage Fightwear**.

THIS PAGE
Vest, £490, by **Amiri**. Trousers (price upon request), by **Versace**.
Trainers (price upon request), by **Puma**.
Gloves, his own, by **Engage Fightwear**.
Ring and earring, his own.



It's Pereira's left hand that's a unique kind of nightmare, however (his nickname comes from the Tupi-Guarani words for "stone hands"). He isn't quite on Adesanya's level in terms of finesse, but he possesses scary power – four of his five UFC victories have ended in KOs. So it goes with Pereira: tough, skulking, looking for the death blow.

Beating the Poatan has long been Izzy's white whale. Pereira's first kickboxing victory over Adesanya, in 2016, was a controversial split decision. In their rematch the following year, Pereira knocked him out with a left hook. In 2017, Adesanya made the jump to MMA; in 2021, the UFC officially signed Pereira, too, setting them both up for a third fight at UFC 281, this time for the middleweight throne.

"I like being in this position. This is where I thrive," Adesanya told me before the fight. "I put all the pressure on myself and I have all the pressure of the world on me as well. But I thrive in this position. I mean, this is what greatness is about. If you really want to be great, you have to do things that challenge you. That challenge your mind."

The scene is Madison Square Garden, a warm night in October, plumes of vape smoke rising to the rafters. The main event starts a little after midnight. Pereira enters first, to a doomy tribal incantation. Adesanya, the overwhelming Garden favourite, enters next, walking serenely out to an orchestral rendition of the Jigsaw theme from *Saw*.

Over the next four rounds, Adesanya seems to have an edge over Pereira, slipping punches, roughing him up with jabs and leg kicks. A right cross followed by a tricky left hook wobbles Pereira at the end of round one, but he's saved by the bell. By the time the fifth and final round rolls around, the match is all but Izzy's to lose. Pereira knows he needs to go for the knockout, and starts stalking Izzy like a Terminator on a mission to avert a nuclear war.

Then, with two minutes to go, Pereira stuns Izzy with a left hook and quickly proceeds to jump all over him. A flurry ensues. The referee calls a stoppage (which would later prove controversial, as it was maybe a beat too early) and the shock ripples through the Garden crowd as we collectively try to process what just happened. To my right, a teenaged Izzy fan, there with his dad, starts bawling.



Trousers, £855, by **Rick Owens**. Headband (price upon request), by **Puma**. Necklaces, from top, £75, by **Vitaly**, stylist's own, his own. Gloves, his own, by **Engage Fightwear**.

Here he is: Alex Pereira, the new UFC world middleweight champion.

For most fighters, losing three fights to an opponent you should have beaten would be devastating. But something remarkable happens. In the post-fight press conference, Adesanya, wearing a big fur coat that would put Jon Snow to shame, adopts a surprising stance for an MMA fighter: gratitude.

"I'm grateful," says Adesanya, when a reporter asks how he's feeling. Although his every killer synapse was

just activated at the highest level, he seems at peace. "What a life. What a moment. What a crazy ending, similar to the last time. The same story."

Perhaps the most modern thing about a competitor like Israel Adesanya isn't that he wears pearls and loves anime and appears on *Hot Ones*. It's that in the UFC, an organisation that often courses with fusty machismo and Monster Energy fumes, he chooses to practise a radical form of vulnerability, and therefore acceptance.

"For me, [getting knocked out], it frees me, because I'm like, oh, what's the worst that can happen? Oh wait, it did. How was I afterwards? I was fine. Easy," Adesanya said before the fight. "It frees me completely. Because I'm like, if it happens again, I'll be fine." ❖

CHRIS GAYOMALI is a US GQ articles editor.

"This is what greatness is about. If you really want to be great, you have to do things that challenge you. That challenge your mind."

A woman with dark hair, wearing a patterned blazer and large hoop earrings, is laughing joyfully while holding a glass of Peroni beer. The background is slightly blurred, showing a festive atmosphere with confetti. The Peroni logo is in the top right, and the slogan 'Live Every Moment' is in the bottom left.

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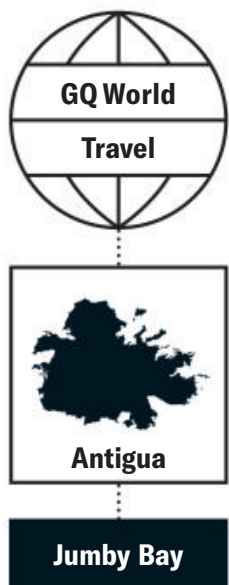
Abercrombie & Kent

THE BIG TRAVEL trend for 2023? There's more to life than Mykonos. This year, we're ditching the rule book. No more well-trodden paths. No more same-old resorts. Instead, it's all about the new. New destinations. Radical approaches. Patently uncommon experiences. Whether it's the under-the-radar Long Island retreat for the post-Hamptons era or the wavy music festival that you've never heard of, this is an itinerary with new stories to tell.



2023 is the Year to Travel Way, Way Out

Edited by DAVID ANNAND



Welcome to the Anti-Resort

Experience that private-island life at Jumby Bay, Antigua's ultra-chilled, ultra-luxurious retreat. BY STUART MCGURK

QUESTION: WHEN DOES a resort not feel like a resort? Easy: when it's a private island paradise. That's the case with Jumby Bay, an island resort off the northeast coast of Antigua – a 10-minute hop by speedboat – surrounded by a Caribbean Sea so turquoise your friends will assume you've fiddled with the filters. Here, luxurious mansions spread over 300 Instagrammable acres so far apart from each other that they require a golf buggy to get to, and their long, winding driveways suggest more of an A-lister's Beverly Hills pad than somewhere you'd stay on holiday. Little wonder, then, that this low-key island getaway has become such a favourite among the rich and famous, with the likes of Sir Paul McCartney and Lionel Messi said to be regulars.

The residence I stayed in, Cocoa Beach, sprawls over 9,000 square feet, boasting seven bedrooms (accommodation for up to 14 people), sea views



from a private stretch of beach, its own pool, indoor/outdoor living and dining areas, and a kitchen from which your own private chef will be happy to prepare your dinner. Naturally, this kind of XXL-living does not come cheap, with Cocoa Beach available from £10,600 a night. (But fear not: the island also boasts more modest residences that start at a rather less eye-watering £1,530 a night, including meals and drinks.)

All the luxury of a private island, without the 'tech billionaire's midlife crisis' energy.

Outside your tropical paradise crib, the island contains a multitude of beachfront bars and restaurants. You'll only ever encounter fellow island-dwellers, as the boat trip from the mainland is exclusively available to those staying overnight, giving the entire island the feel of a balmy private members' club. You can choose to sip cocktails while you tan at the communal beach's Casamigos Margarita Beach Shack, or seek shade at the Jumby Bay Bar and Lounge and cool off in the gentle breeze.

You also won't be short of dining options: The Jumby Bay Veranda offers sublime casual dining, with easily the best view you'll ever have while eating your morning eggs. When you feel like dressing up for an evening or two, there's the Estate House, an upscale restaurant housed in a grand refurbished building that was part of the island's original sugar plantation. Best of the lot, though, is Jumby Bay's beach BBQ, which takes place every Sunday, serving outrageous lobster, chicken and lamb straight from the flame grill. All the attendees dress in white. It's a tradition that was started by the long-term residents themselves: a comforting sense of island community, even if you're only in paradise for a week or two.

Jumby Bay, doubles from £1,530 per night. oetkercollection.com



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The Italian Alps Aren't Just for Christmas

In winter they offer some of Europe's best skiing and come summer they are a natural playground, perfect for hiking, canyoning, and adrenaline sports of all kinds.

I**N WINTER, THE** Italian Alps are one of the world's great ski destinations, with something for snow-lovers of all stripes. There's the glamour of Cortina d'Ampezzo, with its *bella figura* apres-ski and Olympic bobsleigh run. There's the high-altitude resort of Livigno, brilliant for off-piste and heli-skiing. And, near the border with Slovenia, there's the Tarvisio ski resort, home to Di Prampero, one of the most beautiful pistes in Europe.

But the thrills and spills of the ski season are far from the only story when it comes to this region, which, come the summer, is transformed into one of the continent's great outdoor playgrounds, perfect for everything from high-octane adventure sports through to mountain-top spa retreats.

Unsurprisingly, the area's astonishing natural beauty is a big part of the draw and is one of the reasons it has become one of Europe's top

destinations for summertime hiking, with hundreds of routes offering wildly different backdrops. Don't miss the three peaks of the Tre Cime di Lavaredo and the glorious rolling meadowland of Alpe di Siusi. Thrill-seekers are well catered to: this part of Italy is home to the world's highest concentration of *via ferrata*, which utilise wire supports and ladders to open up challenging routes to those who aren't experienced climbers. You can go sunrise hot air ballooning in the Aosta Valley and the area is brilliant for canyoning, kayaking, and rafting.

Thankfully, there are opportunities to relax, too. The radon-rich waters at the Merano thermal baths have been attracting travellers for decades and the region is full of spas, some of which specialise in the region's signature wine therapy, which uses the flavonoids in grapes to slow the aging process

italia.it/en



Clockwise from top: Hiking the Dolomites' Passo delle Erbe trail; Lake Braies in South Tyrol; the famous "Snake Road", part of the mountainous Passo Giau.





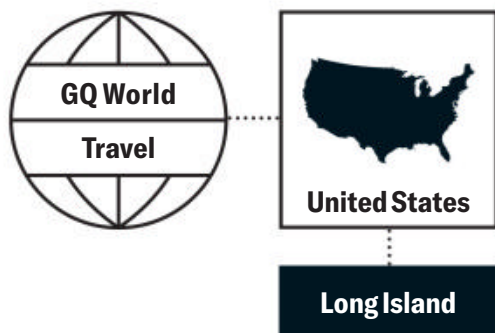
New York's North Fork is the Cooler (and Boozier) Coast

The Hamptons, the New York celebrity set's retreat of choice since forever, is old news. Enter Long Island's North Fork, its laid-back sibling, where the local fizz is always flowing.

BY REBECCA DOLAN

THE HAMPTONS IN the summer is like Midtown Manhattan on New Year's Eve: a good idea if you like giant clusters of bodies and getting ripped off. A "local" Hamptons lobster roll will set you back \$45, and the August beach crowds recall the cosiness of Times Square.

But there's another kind of summer weekend out there, and it's not that far off. Actually, exactly as far as the Hamptons: just two-and-a-half hours' drive from Manhattan, Long Island's less-travelled North Fork (the Hamptons makes up the South Fork) has become the cooler peninsula. At various times dubbed the Hamptons' "country cousin" and the "Brooklyn of Long Island," it's known by the easy-going locals as NoFo. Chill holidaymakers are drawn to the former farmland's waterfront wineries, tucked-away beaches, boutique design stores and roadside farm stands. Even with a slew



of upscale new openings, the North Fork has managed to maintain a vibe that's unapologetically relaxed.

In June, François Payard, a leading light in New York's French food scene, opened the Southold Social, an intimate shingled house that serves the most killer steak frites on the peninsula. Payard also oversees Southold General down the road, a Manhattanite-friendly café serving flaky almond croissants, farm-fresh salads and cold brew on tap. North Fork Table & Inn, from Michelin-starred John Fraser, is the other big hitter in town. It underwent a total renovation in 2021 and now offers a tantalising menu of oysters, caviar, and catches of the day – and bookable personal bonfires for making s'mores.

But food is not the point of the North

Fork: alcohol is. While the South Fork has a mere three wineries, the North Fork has close to 50, and about a dozen breweries. The cheaper real estate made it the better peninsula for planting fields of grapes – almost all French – back in the day. North Fork wineries like to boast that they're on the same latitude as Bordeaux, producing reds that give their French counterparts a run for their money.

In June, journalist Dan Abrams opened Ev&Em Vineyards, a swish Napa-esque spot with sun-drenched decks where guests can taste its flagship wines while drinking in the sprawling views. Another standout is Sparkling Pointe, New York's only dedicated sparkling vineyard, specialising in Méthode Champenoise. You can sip brut dating back to 2013 – medieval times by Long Island wine standards.

A selection of upmarket hotels is also luring a younger, buzzier crowd. The Shoals opened just last year, directly on the Shelter Island Sound, a "boatel" with 20 suites for guests and 20 slips for boats. Rooms are immaculate and seashell-coloured, and come with sweeping views of the bay. You can also watch the oyster-harvesting in action: the women-run Little Ram Oyster Company has a space onsite. The Shoals' vintage charter boat can be used as a shuttle to private beaches, too (but don't come to Long Island

expecting the aquamarine surfs of Mexico – this is still New York).

Nearby, The Menhaden is another worthy option. Located in the heart of the village of Greenport, it's within walking distance of wineries and vintage stores full of vintage '70s jackets and mid-century furniture.

If you tire of the North Fork's rustic-cool energy and can't resist a taste of Hamptons glam, Shelter Island – roughly halfway between the North and South Forks – is a 10-minute ferry ride away. It's home to Sunset Beach, André Balazs's ever-vibey hotel with the comforting feel of a European beach club.

But if you bump into any Hamptonites... mum's the word.

The Shoals, from £400 per night.
theshoalsnorthfork.com

Below right: The Little Ram Oyster Company at The Shoals. *Below left:* This way for wine at Sparkling Pointe vineyard.



Renaissance palaces, incredible food and one of Europe's great hotels: Dubrovnik is the alt city break destination for 2023.

Why Dubrovnik is Croatia's Unspoilt Dream

AT GQ, WHEN we think about our dream weekend destination we tend to conjure in our heads a compact little city, all charming, history-steeped streets and baroque palazzi, with fantastic places to eat and a luxurious hotel. What we're dreaming of is a place that still has that feeling of discovery to it, a place that hasn't become a postcard cliché. Basically, what we're always dreaming of is Dubrovnik.

Architecturally, it's up there with anywhere in Europe. Dubrovnik's winding limestone streets lead to baroque churches, Renaissance palaces and medieval forts recently made famous in *Game of Thrones*. Take a cable car up Mount Srđ for a spectacular view across the city's rooftops, or jump on a shuttle boat to nearby island Lokrum with its shaded beaches, olive groves and Benedictine monasteries. The food scene is similarly exciting: little restaurants turn out plates of grilled octopus and fish fresh from the sea and there are cool bars perched on the rocks below the city's 13th-century walls.

Crucially, the city also has one of the Mediterranean's truly iconic hotels in the form of the Hotel Excelsior Dubrovnik, which has been welcoming



Many of the Excelsior's rooms enjoy stunning views over the Adriatic; relax and unwind at the hotel's indoor pool and spa.

Winding streets lead to baroque churches and medieval forts.

celebrities and royalty for over 100 years. A short walk from the Old Town, in a plum location on the water's edge, the five-star Excelsior is a perfect pairing of old and new: an historic villa and a chic contemporary tower. Inside, the interiors are handsome: natural shades with pops of colour, contemporary art, and glorious views over the Adriatic from the waterside balconies.

The Excelsior has its own beach (with restaurant) and sun loungers to relax on after a swim. There's a spa, too, with a pool, sauna and treatment rooms and the hotel's bar, Abakus, is regarded as one of the best, with live music and an impressive wine list.

But what really sets the hotel apart is its food. The hotel has three restaurants, overseen by Croatian head chef Petar Obad. At Prora you get sea views and seafood: lobster, sea bream and oysters. And then there's the pick of the bunch, Sensus, a fine dining restaurant where the eight-course tasting menu comes with matching wines.

Trust us, once you've visited, Dubrovnik is exactly what will pop into your head when you think of your dream weekend away. ❧

Double rooms from £270 in shoulder season. adriaticluxuryhotels.com

OVER THE LAST ten years or so, Doha has become one of the major centres of contemporary statement architecture, with astonishing creations by Pritzker Prize-winners seemingly around every corner. There's Jean Nouvel's crystal-inspired National Museum and an awesome angular National Library designed by Rem Koolhaas' OMA. The most eye-catching of all the new buildings, though, is surely the Katara Towers, a 211-metre tall architectural interpretation of two intertwined scimitar swords, the national symbol of Qatar, which opened at the end of last year.

Situated on the Doha waterfront with incredible views out over the Arabian Gulf, the towers are home to the Fairmont Doha, one of the most exciting new hotels in the Middle East.

Doha's maritime history has informed the design, which takes its inspiration from mega-yachts, all handsome white spaces, gold tiles in the showers, and extravagant flourishes such as the lobby's 56-metre chandelier, which has nearly 5,000 light bulbs. The rooms are smart, the suites palatial, and throughout the hotel original

artworks are everywhere you look, from the sculptures in the public spaces through to the Lisa Hunt canvases in the Presidential Suite.

The emphasis at the Fairmont Doha is on high-end experiential luxury. Service is impeccable, with Fairmont Gold guests getting access to a dedicated team of butlers and concierges. The shisha lounge has an in-house shisha

The Katara Towers, home to Fairmont Doha, are among the city's most exciting new structures.

The emphasis at the Fairmont Doha is on high-end experiential luxury.



sommelier; the botanical garden is a tranquil spot; and the library has been expertly curated with rare books. There is also an incredible 3,700 square metre spa and fitness area, which includes an indoor climbing wall and immersive spinning studio. The wellness offering focuses squarely on fitness and recovery from injury, with specialist programmes designed to improve sports performance and deliver personalised nutrition. One-on-one sessions can be arranged with international wellbeing gurus and master athletes

Across the hotel there are five dazzling restaurants and the food here is something you experience rather than simply eat. Don't miss the progressive Indian gastronomy at Jiggs Kalra's Masala Library, Latin American street food at Vaya, or a visit to the theatrical pan-Asian restaurant Provok in the Sky Balcony duplex, where chefs cook Teppanyaki and Korean barbecue over an open fire, and a master sculptor carves intricate works from ice blocks.

Agenda-setting design. Astonishing service. Elite-level food. The winter sun break just got elevated.

fairmont.com/doha

Is This the Future of the Winter Sun Break?

A new high-end hotel in Doha takes personalised, experiential luxury above and beyond the ordinary.



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A New Wave in the Mediterranean

A foodie hideaway on Turkey's Aegean coast might topple Mykonos from its perch. BY DAVID ANNAND

IS THIS THE moment we reluctantly call time on Mykonos? The price-gouging. The elbow-to-elbow beaches. The terrible traffic. The undeniable Harry Maguire-ness of the place. For years we put up with the island's downsides because it was out there on its own in the eastern Med. Best hotels. Best food. Best vibe. Nowhere else came close.

Not any more. The Aegean is now home to a whole host of places that can compete with Mykonos's finest. The pick of the bunch? The Yazz Collective, a new beach-club-cum-hotel tucked away on Turkey's southwest coast, which has upped the game and then some.

Here, traffic really isn't a problem. The resort sits against a backdrop of densely wooded hills in a jaw-dropping bay and is accessible only by boat. You either moor up in your chartered schooner or make a suitably starry entrance on the hotel's nippy little speedboat, which meets your transfer from Dalaman airport.

During the week, the Yazz is a tranquil haven, all birdsong and contented hush, where the suites are dotted about lushly planted gardens. Yoga classes take place on sun-dappled decks. Couples lounge on sofas by the water, dipping in and out of the glorious Aegean, with its warm, soft waters.



On Fridays, the atmosphere slowly cranks up as more and more boats arrive, until in the evening there's a party in full swing, with a who's who of Istanbul's scenesters knocking back potent chilli margaritas and flexing on the waterside dancefloor.

There is one constant: the food, which is big, bold and uniformly brilliant. Rising star of Turkish cooking Mustafa Otar is the man in the kitchen, and he's been equipped with a three-tier steel grill, so he can cook over an open fire, and a traditional Turkish



Clockwise from above: Relax in the beachside bar; consider the dock your red carpet; order the muska böreği – trust us.

oven, in which he makes pide and bread from heritage grains. He's also blessed with one of the world's great natural larders: he gets his soy sauce and miso from Asia, but everything else – meat, fish, vegetables – comes from Turkey. The result? Bowls of hummus come topped with smoked olives and fermented pomegranate molasses, seafood pasta is served with hulking great lobsters, and dry-aged tuna steaks are as rich and deeply flavoured as bavette.

The team behind the Yazz are in the process of acquiring a farm in north-west Turkey, and there are all manner of ambitious plans. At the moment, no one in the UK has heard of the place, but believe us: word is about to get out.

The Yazz Collective, doubles from £750 per night. yazzcollective.com

The Greek Island Hideaway Redefining the Holistic Holiday

A packed schedule and a feel-good vibe make this Eden-like haven in Kefalonia 2023's standout island sanctuary for slow living and laidback wellness.

THE FIRST THING you notice about F Zeen, is its abundance. Lushly planted with more than 8,000 trees and plants, the hotel sits in 20 acres on a hill above Lourdas beach on Kefalonia's stunning south coast, and teems with the glories of the natural world: flowers in full bloom, scented bushes crawling over stone walls, the sound of birdsong filling the air. At every turn you are spoiled for choice; one forest pathway leads up to a secret yoga deck with stunning sea views, another to an outdoor gym hidden in the trees. Its charming labyrinthine layout encourages you to explore at your own pace, get lost, chance upon one of its many hilltop hideaways.

But it's the packed weekly schedule that really knocks you sideways. On any given day there will be aerial yoga on one deck, breathwork and meditation on another, HIIT sessions in the gym, an interval workout on the beach. All of it complimentary to guests. It's like a full-service health and fitness retreat, but one you can duck in and out of without feeling the slightest pang of guilt about how much or how little you do.

Beyond the group classes, there is enough going on to fill a fortnight, and then some. You can paddleboard or snorkel, play tennis, watch a film at the wonderful under-the-stars outdoor cinema, lounge by one of three pools, book the golf simulator tucked away in the forest, take a guided hike to the peak of Mount Ainos, or head to the Idor Spa for a rejuvenating Ionian massage.



The rooms at F Zeen have been decorated using a colour palette of earthy tones and sand-coloured stone. All have views over the sparkling waters of the Ionian Sea.

The rooms are themselves little sanctuaries, all earthy tones and sand-coloured stone. Some of the gorgeous suites have their own pools and incredible views over to Zakynthos. If you're travelling with friends be sure to book the three-bedroom villa, which has its own pool, yoga deck, gym, and kitchen.

There are two restaurants, Gaia and Selini, both of which make good use of the hotel's abundant chef's garden and the surrounding sea to create perfectly measured menus, featuring big bold flavours and super-fresh salads. Think grilled octopus doused with oil and lemon, and big bowls of risotto studded with seafood – delicious food that is naturally and unpretentiously healthy.

This kind of balanced approach in the kitchen is part of F Zeen's wider vision of the good life: slow-paced and soulful, everything done in harmony with the environment around it. It's a way of being that it's honed to a fine art.

fzeenretreat.com





Cosy corners at The Whittling House.

IF YOU'VE EVER taken the train from London to Edinburgh, you've already seen it out of the window: the last corner of coastal England not yet ruined by Airbnb entrepreneurs or #vanlife TikTok. Tucked in just below the Scottish border, Northumberland is England's most sparsely populated county and – not coincidentally – one of its most beautiful. There are vast, rolling hills, forests where you can hear a pine cone drop, and, best of all, 62 miles of unspoiled (and usually empty) coastline, punctuated not by ghostly Victorian piers but more castles per mile than anywhere else in the country.

If that all sounds like ancient history, well, it is – which is why Northumberland has upped its game. A food-and-drink-led reinvention is firmly underway, with aspiring chefs enticed by the county's relatively low rents and bountiful North Sea.

The tiny fishing village of Alnmouth,

accessible directly on the train from London, is a great launchpad to explore the true North – provided you can find a room. Local boutique hotel The Whittling House wouldn't look out of place down a Bloomsbury side street, but only has 10 rooms. If you're feeling brave, there's a row of cosy glamping huts along the beach – fuel your brisk walk home with a fireside nightcap at The Red Lion.

Amble, a slightly forgotten port town just a few years ago, is now the epicentre of Northumberland's foodie rejuvenation. The Old Boathouse, situated on the harbour, was the restaurant that launched it all, while Jaspers, a tiny 12-cover bistro, has had

guests hooked since 2016 with its local take on bouillabaisse.

For any surfers still pining for the sands of Cornwall, Bamburgh Beach might be a degree or two colder, but on a good day, the North Sea will offer up decent waves before the mighty sight of Britain's best-kept castle. Sally Cook of Surf Northumberland is a veteran of the Portugal and Brazil surfing scenes and can help beginners and old hands alike. Whether you want to watch the waves or conquer them, there's never been a better time to swap being a DFL (Down From London) for a UFL.

The Whittling House, doubles from £180 per night. thewhittlinghouse.co.uk

Not Westeros, but Bamburgh Castle.

Word's Out on England's Secret Kingdom

Bored of battling your way to the south coast with everyone else? Do a 180 and try Northumberland, England's lowest-key coastal paradise. BY SAM PARKER



Hold Up: The Island City Break Does It All



Top: Views so good, they come with a frame. Bottom: Perfect snorkelling conditions at Cales Cove, Alaior.

Beachside retreat? Boring. Not to mention antisocial. In Menorca, you can enjoy the best of city life with all the luxury of island living. BY DAVID ANNAND

RECENTLY, I REALISED I've been getting the island holiday all wrong. The way I'd always done it was to hole up in some tranquil, out-of-the-way spot: the north coast of Ibiza. The far-end of Formentera. Places like Menorca's Meliá Cala Galdana, which sits in a gorgeous little cove, well-placed for the west of the island, with its white-washed walls and incredible sea views.

During the day I'd happily play designated driver, buckling the gang into some little Fiat 500 and buzzing about the island, hunting for unspoilt beaches and seeking out chic lunch spots. At night, though, I want nightlife. Cocktails (plural). This can be problematic when your

other half doesn't drive and you're staying in some pretty-but-isolated beachside bolthole.

And then I went to Menorca, specifically its super-cool capital Mahon, and I rediscovered the pleasures of city life. Food! Culture! Cocktails that you actually want to drink! From the city, you can drive out in search of wild and undeveloped beaches (in Menorca, this means the glorious calm-water cove at Cala Mitjana, or the fabled Cala Pregonda, with its intense blue waters and atmospheric rock formations) when you feel like it, and walk to a different restaurant every night. And that means that after 5pm, no one is designated to do anything they don't want to – which, when you're on holiday, is just as it should be.





Left: Work up your cocktail appetite exploring historic Mahon. Below left: Floating art at Hauser & Wirth.

12hrs in Mahon

How to design a day of vibe in Menorca's compact capital

11am **Hauser & Wirth**

Take the five-minute ferry to the latest European outpost of the fine art empire, situated on a tiny island in the city's harbour, and explore the garden sculpture trail with works by Martin Creed, Louise Bourgeois and Joan Miró.

1pm **El Rais**

Head to the harbour to this smart waterside restaurant for their arroz negro, an outlandish sharing plate of black rice in rockfish broth.

3pm **Hit the water**

Call the Marco Polo yacht company and set sail on their locally built Menorquin boat, hugging the shoreline up to Es Grau on the wild and untouched north coast.

7pm **Bar Augustin**

Start the evening with a glass of Mallorcan Son Llebre Blanc at this chilled natural wine spot in a pretty square right in the heart of the city.

8pm **Ses Culleres**

Grab a spot on the terrace, with its vertiginous views of the harbour, and order for the table: deep-fried wild asparagus, white Menorcan prawns and the life-changing cheesecake.

10pm **Vida Una Vermut**

Finish up at this buzzy bar in the heart of the restaurant-lined port, where the tables spill onto the road and the barmen make Spanish-sized (read: massive) negronis into the small hours.



Breakfast with a view, dinner by the pool, and a collection of killer seating options at Cristine Bedfor Hotel.



The Hotel: Cristine Bedfor



There's a dash of the Wes Anderson to this glorious guesthouse. Not the mannered whimsy of the place – more the colour palette of bold-but-faded shades that give the place a lightly worn, lived-in style. It somehow manages to be homely and worldly at the same time. The interiors are the work of host Cristine Bedfor and celebrated Spanish designer Lorenzo Castillo, and the look is English indulgent: all deep sofas, expressive fabrics and eccentric ceramics. There are 21 rooms, all different; if it's free, stay in the biggest of the lot, 113, with its freestanding bath and tennis-court-sized terrace. Breakfast is served on the charming patio, and out the back, in the otherwise lush and shaded garden, there's a chic little pool for cooling off on hot days. The central Mahon location could barely be improved, with almost everything of note a five-minute walk from your front door, making this the perfect base for an urban island getaway. ❧

Cristine Bedfor Hotel, doubles from £225 per night. cristinebedforhotel.com

Why an Epic Resort on the Turkish Riviera Is the Perfect All-Rounder

Clever design and incredible variety make Voyage Belek Golf & Spa a year-round destination for romantic getaways, family holidays, and improving your swing.



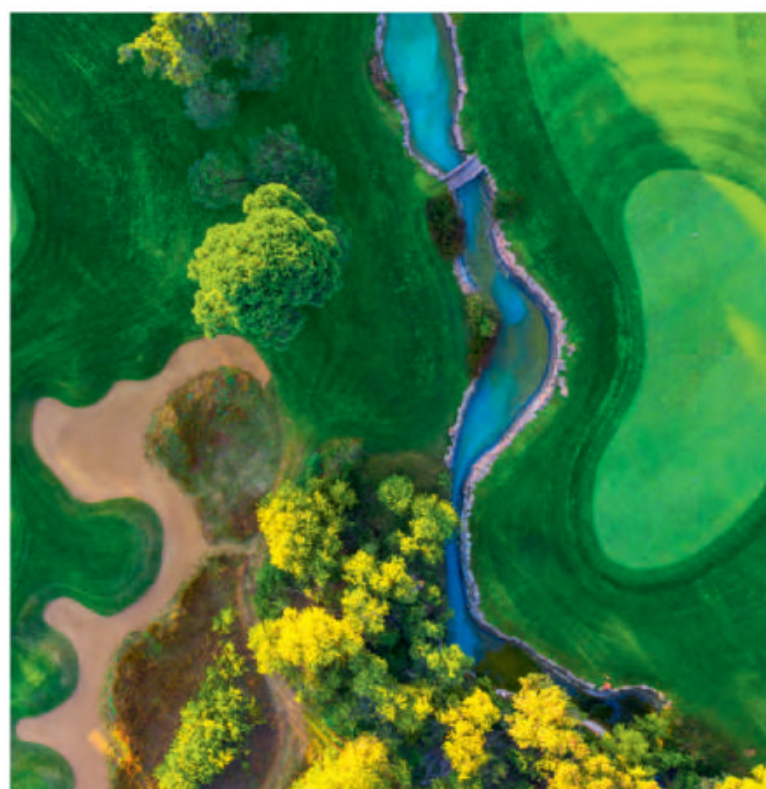
YOU KNOW YOU'RE somewhere special when it hits all the high notes, when it isn't just good at one thing, but excels, well, at basically everything. And so it is with the Voyage Belek Golf & Spa, a beautifully put together resort on Turkey's stunning Anatolian coast, which manages to be excellent for everyone: couples, families, and golf-obsessives.

In some ways, it's the incredible scale of the place that makes this possible. The resort has its own 300 metre private beach, which means it can have two distinct piers: one for families and one for over-16s only. But really the Voyage Belek's across-the-board appeal is a product of its incredible range of things to do.

For couples, there's heaps beyond the gorgeous sandy beach and the adults-only pool, not least the resort's seven à la carte restaurants, which allow you to eat around the world: there's an intimate Italian, a bright and breezy Mexican, and a theatrical Japanese teppanyaki grill.

Working up an appetite isn't a problem: as well as an epic gym there are tennis courts and water sports of all kinds. Relaxing is not much of a challenge either. The Sense spa has saunas and steam rooms, Turkish hammam and vitamin bar, and treatment rooms where you can get everything from Ayurvedic herbal therapies to Jimbaran four-hands massage.

When it comes to families, the team behind the resort understand that unless everyone has a good time no one has a good time, which means they have gone above and beyond for



Clockwise from left: The adults-only pool at Voyage Belek; the nearby Montage Maxx Royal golf course, home to the Turkish Open; dining at Kebappa; balcony views look out over Turkey's turquoise coast.



the little ones. As well as special age-specific kids' clubs, there are adventure parks, and an incredible pirate-themed aqua park with slides and splash zones. You can book two-bedroom villas and there's a special buffet created especially for children.

Beyond the peak summer months, the resort is perfect for winter golf breaks in the peace and calm of the low season. On the resort's doorstep is the Montage Maxx Royal, a tournament-standard 18-hole course designed by Ryder Cup legend Colin Montgomerie. It's so good that Tiger Woods has played it and it has hosted the Turkish Open on four occasions. Brilliantly, the back nine is illuminated, so you can play on after dark, the grass vividly green under the floodlights. And when it comes to the 19th hole, you're spoiled for choice: the resort is home to a dizzying number of concept bars and a classy steak house.



Beyond the peak summer months, the resort is perfect for winter golf breaks.

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Four Days at Italy's Temple of Detox

There are health retreats, and then there are health retreats. At the Palace Merano, GQ has a full MOT. Colon cleansing optional.
BY OLIVER FRANKLIN-WALLIS

RELAX,” SAYS THE nurse, not long into my first colon hydrotherapy session. I am lying on a bed in a backless gown, beside a terrifying-looking irrigation machine; she is brandishing what can only be described as a lubed-up hose-pipe. “Easy for you to say,” I joke, but she doesn’t laugh. The nurse is stern, Italian, and speaks little English – and besides, she has enough shit to deal with.

I should explain. The editor of GQ’s annual travel guide was hoping to assign a writer for a story about Healing Holidays, a company that has cornered the market in ultra-luxe health retreats. I have struggled with chronic pain for more than two years, due to an ongoing and poorly diagnosed nerve problem. So, sure, I said, half-joking, half-desperate – “Do you think they can heal me?” Which is why I’m here, on day four of my retreat at the Palace Merano, a luxury hotel in the Italian Alps and one of the most exclusive health retreats in the world, waiting to be flushed from the inside out.

In health circles, the Palace Merano’s reputation is approaching legendary. It has accrued numerous awards. Its clientele, from what I can tell, ranges from the wealthy to the ultra-rich: pro athletes hoping to recover quickly from injuries; burnt-out financiers; the chronically sick; the oligarch-adjacent. Founded in 1906, the hotel became famous under the watchful eye of detox pioneer Henri Chenot. At the core of the Palace’s approach is the Revital method – a blend of Western and Chinese medicine. In 2015, the Palace unveiled a fully licensed medical floor, able to deliver tests and prescriptions alongside cosmetic and full-body treatments – in short, the perfect destination for a midlife-crisis full-body MOT.

On my first morning I am assigned a number of blood and urine tests to measure for blood markers and allergies, a scan of my fat and bone density, and a test in which I hold some electrodes while a machine tests my energy levels, which will affect my “healing



energy treatment.” (I’m told I have a “white element” body type, apparently.) I’m quickly assigned to an osteopath, a dietitian and a cosmetic specialist, who suggests an ab treatment for a slowly expanding waistline.

The Merano’s mantra is detox. The menus contain no salt, sugar, caffeine, or alcohol – instead leaning heavily on braised vegetables and fish. To drink: water with lemon, or detox tea, which every evening my lovely waiter delivers with the same, adorably lame joke: “Wine?”

Most guests at the Palace choose the detox programme, which involves a day of fasting, as well as a chemically induced “cleanse.” (Cue a glass of white powder and an evening on the toilet.) Portions are small but deeply nourishing: crumbled soy and “vegan charcoal” on a bed of cauliflower and wild

Above: Did we mention the heated indoor and outdoor pools? Below: The Alpine trails are perfect for a post-colonic hike.



broccoli; polenta gnocchi with shiitake mushrooms; white fish, simply cooked. There is no dessert.

The therapy is intensive and restorative. I start daily with ozone therapy (in which blood is taken, mixed with gas, and re-inserted) and a vitamin infusion, which leaves me giddy but invigorated. The osteopath focuses on my gait and relieving tension in my lungs and ribcage. The dietitian produces a meal plan to cut down on sugar, fat and dairy. The rest of my schedule is a mix of mud wraps, massages, and yes – the colon cleanse, which is designed to detox and reset my dysbiosis, an imbalance in gut flora whose repercussions I will spare you here.

By the day I leave, I feel fantastic. My test results come back: I’m free of diabetes and cancer, and have healthy cholesterol – a massive relief. I have lost nearly 3.5kg in four days. My skin is glowing; my wife says I look five years younger. Is my pain gone? Unfortunately but inevitably, no. Even the most luxurious retreat can’t work miracles. But still, I leave feeling positive, healthy, and more empowered than I have in years. And that feeling alone is a luxury worth the trip.

The Palace Merano, seven nights from £5,549 per person. Alternative treatments available. palace.it; healingholidays.com



Why 2023's Big Ticket is a Swiss Jazz Festival

It's decades old and it takes place in a sleepy town in Europe's most bourgeois country, but Montreux Jazz might just be your new favourite festival. BY BEN ALLEN

WOULD YOU BE surprised to hear that Stormzy is a stalwart of the Montreux Jazz Festival? Or that at last year's event, Olly Alexander drove a leather-clad man around onstage like a motorcycle? Gone are the days of stuffy fedora-wearing snobs populating the shores of Lake Geneva. The "Jazz" in the festival's title is now mostly a nod to its history, when the towering likes of Miles Davis and Ella Fitzgerald filled the headline slots, but since the 1980s, the festival has opened up to all sorts of genres. Last year, for example, Nick Cave was there, and so was Björk. Phoebe Bridgers closed it. Shania Twain, who lives up the road, popped in for an impromptu set at one of the bars notorious for starry jam sessions.

The appeal for such generational artists is manifold: Montreux's festival has a rich history, and has played host to basically every great musician you can think of – the walls in the main



venue, the 2m2c Montreux Music and Convention Centre, are adorned with pictures of Amy Winehouse, Lady Gaga and other legends doing their thing on stage. And then there's the setting: the gorgeous mountainside shores of the lake are spitting distance away, ensuring ludicrously beautiful views. Glastonbury could never.

Montreux itself is a tiny, sleepy town, pretty much entirely overtaken by the festival and its sprawling grounds. We

Top: As festivals go, Montreux is quite civilised. Above: The view from the shores of Lake Geneva.

stayed in nearby Vevey, at the Hôtel des Trois Couronnes, one of those classically grand European hotels so married to its history that you'd expect to see a bellboy in one of those funny little hats. It's far enough away (about 15 minutes by car) to feel entirely removed from the festival bustle. The hotel has a pool, but you'd be mad not to walk the extra 30 metres to the lake, the water of which both looks and tastes like Evian (though it's recommended that you don't drink it). As the festival typically kicks off late, there's plenty of time to bake in the sun on the bankside, hit up a vineyard for a glass of Chasselas blanc, or stroll around one of the local hilltop towns, which are so pretty they're UNESCO-protected. The best bit? There are next to no tourists, even at the height of summer – leaving you to soak up the good vibes in peace.

Hôtel des Trois Couronnes, doubles from £328 per night. hoteltroiscouronnes.ch



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PEEK INSIDE THE RIP-ROARING



PARTY

One night in November, we gathered our most talented friends from culture, fashion and sport for a special 25th edition of Men of the Year. The result? One hell of a celebration.

PORTRAITS BY DANNY KASIRYE
OTHER PHOTOGRAPHS BY JAMES MASON,
JAMES D KELLY AND JASON LLOYD EVANS
SET DESIGN BY JOSH STOVELL

IN ASSOCIATION WITH

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STORMZY

"I'm just forever grateful. I never want to be a person who's so deep in this that it just feels like a routine. To this day, it feels like an honour and a privilege to be among such people who are amazing and respected in their fields."



ANDREW GARFIELD

"I'm terrified to be standing here in front of a room of people I've admired for the last 20 years. I'm in a room with Ben Whishaw, who I watched doing *Hamlet* at drama school. I grew up watching Louis Theroux's work. Stormzy! I listened to "Heavy Is the Head" and cried in the gym. Thank you for including me in this incredible room that I hope I never get used to."

I**N LATE AUTUMN** last year, we brought together the stars of our MOTY issue – plus zeitgeist-altering talent from culture, fashion and sport – for an unforgettable evening at our annual GQ Men of the Year Party, in association with BOSS. Together with our other partners, Peroni and Jaguar, we celebrated the 25th year of MOTY in what proved to be a birthday bash for the ages.

After a red carpet featuring some seriously big fits, with make-up by Charlotte Tilbury, we celebrated over dinner at the Mandarin Oriental in Knightsbridge, with incredible food by Heston Blumenthal. Host Jack Guinness led proceedings, while our guests toasted GQ's class of 2022, from *House of The Dragon*'s Emma D'Arcy and Emmy winner Lee Jung-jae, to sporting-legend-turned-campaigner Sir Mo Farah.

Ditching the traditional awards ceremony, we introduced a little light roasting to proceedings. Aitch described his pal Jack Harlow as someone "Simon Cowell would make an amazing boyband around"; Charlie Cox joked that his former roommate and MOTY cover star Andrew Garfield had secured "his legacy as the third greatest Spider-Man of all time."

There were heartfelt messages, too, for our other honourees. Little Simz praised Stormzy for being "a solid, solid, caring individual." Marvel star Will Poulter and ex-Arsenal star Alex Scott cheered Lioness Leah Williamson for her impeccable leadership in football. And Paul Mescal paid tribute to *Heartstopper* boys Joe Locke and Kit Connor, saying: "You should be incredibly proud of what you've achieved and the talented men that you are."

We adjourned to the House of MOTY, our exclusive party hosted at the Pavilion Club – with delicious canapés from Lush by Tom Kerridge – and Jack Harlow treated us to a live performance. Downstairs, a DJ line-up curated by Stormzy kept the dance-floor rocking until 3am. Here's what went down at one hell of a party, with pictures from our GQ portrait studio.



THE HOUSE OF MOTY AT THE PAVILION



JOHN BOYEGA ARRIVES IN A JAGUAR I-PACE



STORMZY

PAUL MESCAL



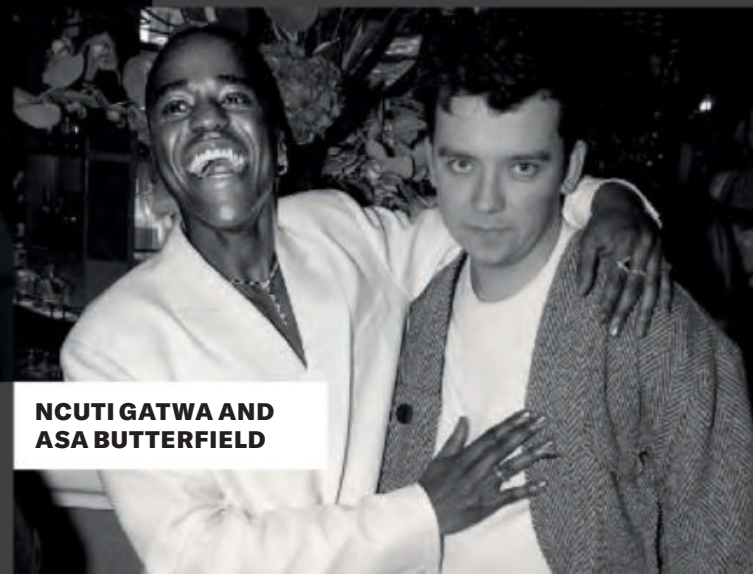
JACK HARLOW



JAMES MCAVOY



ANNA WINTOUR AND GQ'S ADAM BAIDAWI



NCUTI GATWA AND ASA BUTTERFIELD



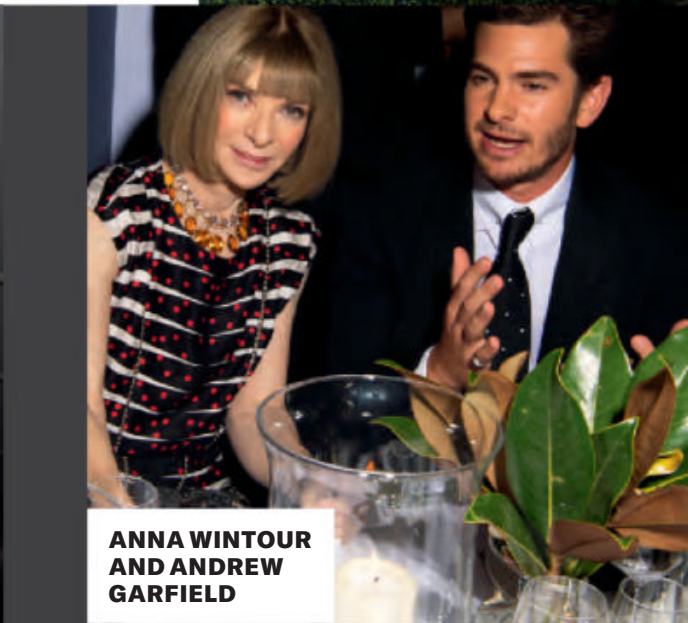
STORMZY AND LOUIS THEROUX



SETTING THE STAGE FOR BIG FITS



LITTLE SIMZ AND SHEILA ATIM



**ANNA WINTOUR
AND ANDREW
GARFIELD**

JOSEPH QUINN



JACK HARLOW



OUR DRINKS PARTNERS: DAOU, PATRÓN, COCA-COLA, SCHWEPES, SLINGSBY, LAURENT-PERRIER, WOODFORD RESERVE, PERONI AND NEW LONDON LIGHT



SYDNEY SWEENEY

"I'm so appreciative and so grateful that I'm able to play characters that have resonated with so many people, and I really hope I can continue to do so."

JACK HARLOW

"It's one thing making your dreams come true in your home country, but I'm starting to feel comfortable over here. Thank you *GQ* for honouring me; this is huge. When I showed this cover to people back home, they lost their fucking minds."



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PAUL MESCAL



PERONI



NATALIA GAMERO DEL CASTILLO



SABRINA ELBA,
VANESSA
KINGORI
AND NEELAM
GILL IN BOSS



STORMZY AND ANDREW GARFIELD



JORDAN BARRETT AND
SUKI WATERHOUSE

MYHA'LA HERROLD, DAVID
JONSSON, HARRY LAWTEY
AND MARISA ABELA

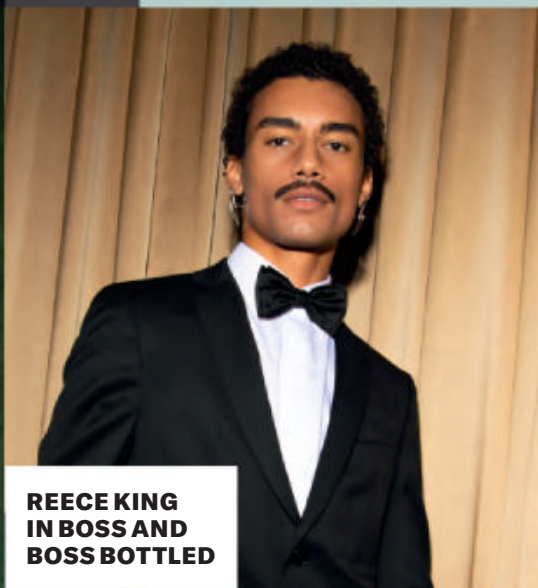


LOUIS THEROUX
ARRIVES IN A
JAGUAR I-PACE

GQ World
Rubric



NCUTI GATWA



REECE KING
IN BOSS AND
BOSS BOTTLED



DAISY EDGAR-JONES

GQ'S ADAM
BAIDAWI
AND
SYDNEY
SWEENEY



JOURDAN DUNN IN BOSS

LEE JUNG-JAE



MYHA'LA
HERROLD
ARRIVES IN
A JAGUAR
I-PACE



LEAH WILLIAMSON

"I represent a group of people who have been overlooked for such a long time. The injustice hurts me every day, it's what inspires me every day and it's also that journey I'm on. This is a moment."

**KIT CONNOR
AND JOE LOCKE**

"*Heartstopper* meant so much to us personally, and so much to a lot more people in the world than we thought it would, and it's been so great to have been a part of a show that's meant so much to people who felt they haven't seen themselves on screen," says Joe. "It's been the craziest year, and I can't think of anyone better to have shared it with than Kit."





JOURDAN DUNN AND JOHN BOYEGA



YASMIN FINNEY



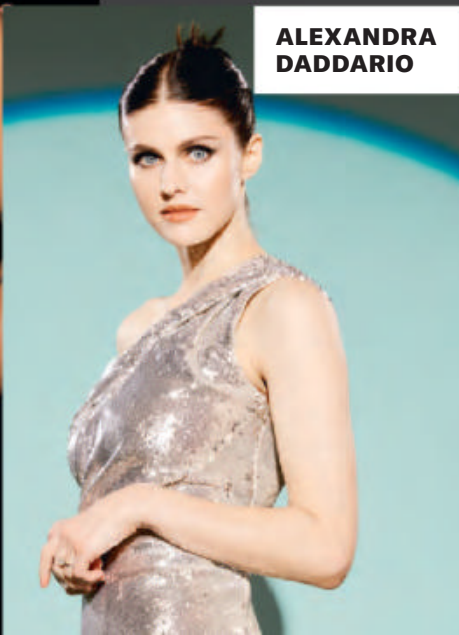
JACK HARLOW AND AITCH



JOERG HORCHER, BOSS MD



HARRY LAWTEY,
WILL POULTER
AND MYHA'LA
HERROLD



ALEXANDRA
DADDARIO



SYDNEY SWEENEY

Inside Our Ultra-Swag MOTY Party Bags



Thanks to our many partners, this year our MOTY class of 2022 took home: **Sub-Zero De-Puffing Energy Facial Mask by 111Skin** Effervescent Tablets in Blood Orange by 8Greens **Clifton Cabin Case by Antler** Clifton Vanity Case by Antler **AG1 Travel Pack and Bottle by Athletic Greens** EGF Serum by Bioeffect **Boss Alive Eau de Parfum For Her 80ml** Boss Steer Watch or Boss Chain Ladies' Yellow Gold Tone Bracelet Watch **Over-Ear Noise-Cancelling Headphones by Bowers & Wilkins** Candle by Byredo **1 x custom phone case and 1 x phone strap by Casetify** Calming After-Shaving Moisturiser by Cellular Goods **Brow Fix Sculpting Gel by Charlotte Tilbury** Charlotte's Magic Lip Oil Crystal Elixir by Charlotte Tilbury **Cryo-Recovery Eye Serum by Charlotte Tilbury** Visia Skin Analysis by The Clinic Holland Park **BioLumin-C Serum by Dermalogica** Malachite NP Complex Serience Night Serum by Environ Focus Care Youth+ **Foaming Cream Cleanser by Eve Lom** The Special Mask by EviDenS de Beaute **Purifying Facial Cleanser in Kashmiri Saffron & Neem by Forest Essentials** Fraîcheur Ice Globes by Fraîcheur Paris **Tin of compostable coffee pods by Grind** Hydrating Night Lotions by Harry's **Truman Razors by Harry's** Hero Mighty Patches by Hero Cosmetics **PAP+ Whitening Strips by Hismile** Three-pack and voucher by High Water **Purifying Face Mask by Horace** Boss Bottled Parfum 100ml by Hugo Boss **True Enlightenment Scalp Scrub by Innersense Organic Beauty** Membership of The Ivy **Pink Vetiver Hand Sanitisers and Hand Lotions by Jo Loves** Phyto A+ Brightening Treatment by SkinCeuticals at John Bell & Croyden **Green Mandarin Vitamin Glow Night Cream with Hyaluronic Acid by Decl  r at John Bell & Croyden** Clarity Beauty Dose supplements and face mask by 111Skin at John Bell & Croyden **Diamond Contour Supercharged 1-Minute Daily Facial by Kaplan MD Skincare at John Bell & Croyden** Consultation and bespoke 60-minute facial by Dr Haus Dermatology at John Bell & Croyden **Discovery Set by Wildsmith Skin at John Bell & Croyden** SOS Revitalising Eye Mask by Decree at John Bell & Croyden **Deep Cleanse by Decree at John Bell & Croyden** Overnight stay in Art'otel in Battersea and dinner for two at JOIA **Voucher for a pair of glasses by Kirk&Kirk** Mind Journal by MindJournal **Re-Charge Black Pepper Bath & Shower Gel by Molton Brown** Re-Charge Black Pepper Body Lotion by Molton Brown **Clarifying Oil-Free Water Gel by Murad** Hydra-Bright Gold Eye Mask by MZ Skin **Light Therapy Golden Facial Treatment Device by MZ Skin** Voucher for a case of water by Neue Water **Sanitising Treatment Mist by Never Go Alone** Trinity Starter Kit by NuFace **Uplift Unisex by Nurse Jamie** Shampoo and Conditioner Bundle by Olaplex **Deep Cleansing Mask by Omorovicza** Sonic+ Toothbrush by Ordo **Dry Paste by Paul Mitchell** Cooling Aftershave Balm by Paul Mitchell **1-month and 1-year memberships to Pavilion** Chilli Vinegar Dressing by Poon's **Bio Retinoid Eye Cream by Ren** Voucher for one night in a suite by The Rosewood **Essentials Discovery Kit by S'able Labs** Pro Glow Hydrating Gel-Cream by Skinwork **Charcoal silk pillowcase by Slip** Good Genes Glycolic Acid Treatment by Sunday Riley **Super Glow Hyaluronic Self-Tan Serum by Tan-Luxe** 9-Ingredient Face Moisturiser by Typology **Voucher for personal art consultation gift by West Contemporary Art** Two-night stay at Wilderness Reserve, Suffolk **NMN 60 Boosting Anti-Ageing Food Supplements by Youth & Earth** *Child of Sedition* REID print by Fin DAC, GQ special edition (signed, numbered and stamped by the artist)

**MICHEAL WARD
IN BOSS AND
BOSS BOTTLED**

Top Boy's Micheal Ward wore classic black tie from Boss for the occasion. We'd also like to thank our other partners: the Corinthia Hotel and Virgin Atlantic.



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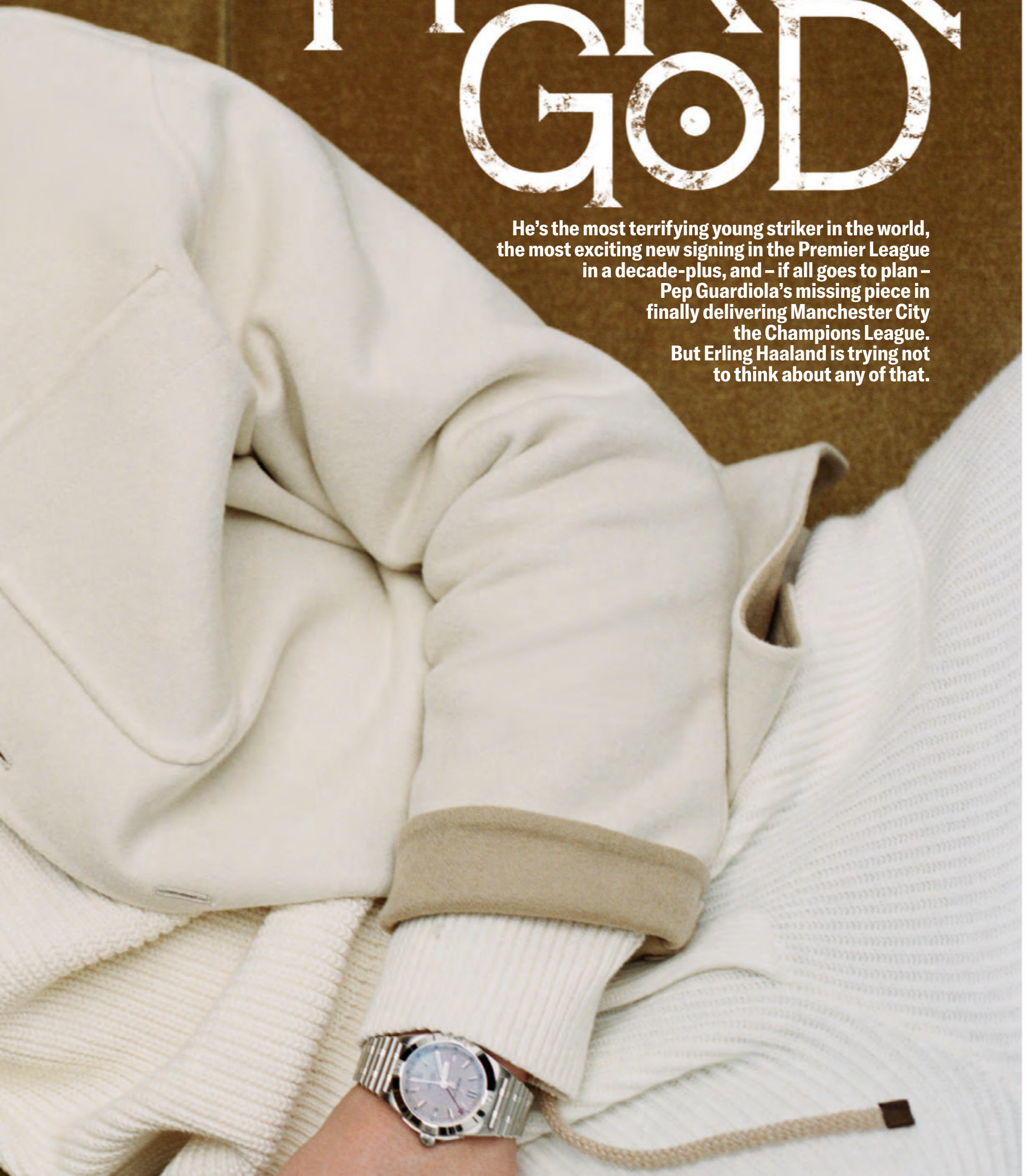
BOSS



By **OLIVER FRANKLIN-WALLIS**
Photographs by **BUZZ WHITE**
Styling by **ANGELO MITAKOS**

NØRSE GOD

He's the most terrifying young striker in the world, the most exciting new signing in the Premier League in a decade-plus, and – if all goes to plan – Pep Guardiola's missing piece in finally delivering Manchester City the Champions League. But Erling Haaland is trying not to think about any of that.





THE WAY THEY talk about him, you'd think he was an old wives' tale. A creature of folklore, a beast of the deep. They call him "a monster" (Arsene Wenger), a "force of nature" (Jurgen Klopp), a "freak" (Paul Dickov). Pep Guardiola calls his stats "scary"; "just not normal", says Thierry Henry. Opposition goalkeepers (in this case, FC Copenhagen's Kamil Grabara) describe him as "not human". Similes are tested, overstretched: he's "like a superhero in a cartoon" (Jan Åge Fjørtoft), "a prime Mike Tyson" (Troy Deeney), a "one-man wrecking ball" (Owen Hargreaves). Even the newspapers, who should know better, lose it. Spain's *Marca* depicts him as a cyborg. *The New York Times* describes him as "a glitch in the system", and *The Guardian*, most bizarrely, a "ravenous nordic goal-yeti."

This being the 21st century, they share clips, too. Of the time Erling Haaland scored nine goals (nine!) in an under-20s game against Honduras, a humiliation that left his dejected opponents crying on the sidelines. Or the hat-trick he scored on his Champions League debut. Or the time he nearly broke the world 60-metre sprint record in a midweek game against Paris Saint-Germain.

By 18 he is the best player in Norway; by 20, he is voted the best player in Germany; by 21, FIFPro names him among the 11 best players in the world. Such potential at a young age is difficult to compute, literally: he is so good that the developers of Football Manager have to tweak his stats to prevent him from breaking the game. Soon he is a regular midweek trending topic. His exploding popularity on social media is so overwhelming that the tourist board of Halland, a picturesque region in Sweden,

complains that Haaland's online popularity has almost wiped them off the face of Google: "If nothing is done," they write in a statement, "we fear our dear region is at risk of becoming a forgotten Atlantis, a place only known in stories and ancient scriptures."

When Haaland finally arrives in the Premier League in 2022, he continues to gobble scoring records like Pac-Man does those little yellow pips: 18 goals in his first 13 games, including three consecutive home hat-tricks. Twenty-five goals in 20 games in the Champions League. Routine goals, spectacular goals, goals of dazzling skill and brute force. All the while, his admirers, opponents, teammates and managers struggle to put Erling Haaland into words.

But, for my money, I think former England striker Peter Crouch puts it simplest: "I haven't seen this from a player this young. Ever."

Erling Braut Haaland, still only 22 years old, has grown used to all of this by now – he enjoys it, preys on it. Strikers want to be feared; football, Haaland knows, is a game played not only on the pitch, but in the mind. For the last couple of years, on 31 October, he's taken to posing elaborate photoshopped memes on Instagram – himself as lasagne-eating Terminator, himself as chainsaw-wielding maniac – along with a joke: "Happy Haalandween!"

"It's fun," Haaland says. "It's good banter." But otherwise, he says, he tries not to pay that kind of thing too much attention. Haaland is not someone who avidly checks match reports or watches the post-game chatter. And he certainly doesn't read the comments. "I'm not sitting on social media reading about myself," he says. "You cannot control what people say, think, and write about you. So there's nothing I can do about it."

Then he adds something that in the moment seems throwaway, but which I later come to suspect might just be the key to all of it. He says: "I don't care."

IN PERSON, HE is almost disappointingly normal: tall, at 6ft 4in, but not imposing, muscular, but not freakishly so. We meet at the Manchester City training ground on an icy Wednesday in December, during this Premier League season's strange winter hiatus. Norway did not qualify for the World Cup, and so Haaland has been enjoying a rare break – "getting some sun in, trying not to think about football," he says – while also trying to maintain match fitness for the January restart. When I arrive, he is the only player in the gym, dressed loosely in City's Puma training kit and slides, his hair pulled back into a ponytail. Without an arranged place to talk, we take a seat in a nearby meeting room. In the oppressive confines of an

executive chair, Haaland exudes an almost dangerous boredom, a predator without a quarry.

Haaland has settled in quickly in Manchester. His £51m transfer from Borussia Dortmund in June felt like a homecoming of sorts. Haaland was born in the UK; his father, Alfie, played for Manchester City himself from 2000 until his early retirement in 2003. Erling Haaland was just a toddler at the time, too young to remember much – "a little bit when I see pictures, but not a lot," he says – and the family moved back to Norway when he was three. But still, he felt a connection with the club. "My parents knew how the country was, so that was a good thing. And for me to then play at the same club as him is also special." (That Manchester City was one of perhaps a half-dozen clubs in the world who could afford his wages is a happy coincidence.)

The ease of his transition has been aided by his success on the pitch, where his impact has been both immediate and stupendous. After a quiet first game in the Community Shield, Haaland scored twice on his Premier League debut and has not stopped since: at the time of writing he has scored 24 goals in 19 games, or on average a goal every 60 or so minutes, and scored more alone than 11 out of 20 Premier League sides have with their entire teams. (Update: it's now 26 goals in 20 games – he scored two while I was writing this.)

It is not just the numbers that invite hyperbole, but the style in which he finishes them. Take his opening goal against Brighton in October, when Brighton defender Adam Webster effectively bounces off Haaland as he sprints through on goal. Or the one against Dortmund in September, in which he beats two defenders to a Joao Cancelo cross and hits it not with his head but with the outside of his left boot, which he has suddenly swung up above his head like a ballerino in *grand battement*,

a feat of such absurd athleticism and proprioceptive precision that the commentator can only say, "Sometimes you cannot believe your eyes."

Countless hours of commentary and column inches have already been spent dissecting Haaland the phenomenon – why he, above others, is so prolific at such a young age. Is it his athleticism? Well, yes. His natural finishing instincts? Sure. The problem with trying to analyse Haaland is that he is what a lazier pundit might call the "full package": quick, strong, as skilful running with the ball at his feet as he is with his back to goal. Even among elite strikers he is an uncommonly accurate shooter, seemingly always able to find a pocket of space beyond the reach of the keeper's outstretched fingers, or, when required, able to blast the football with almost zero



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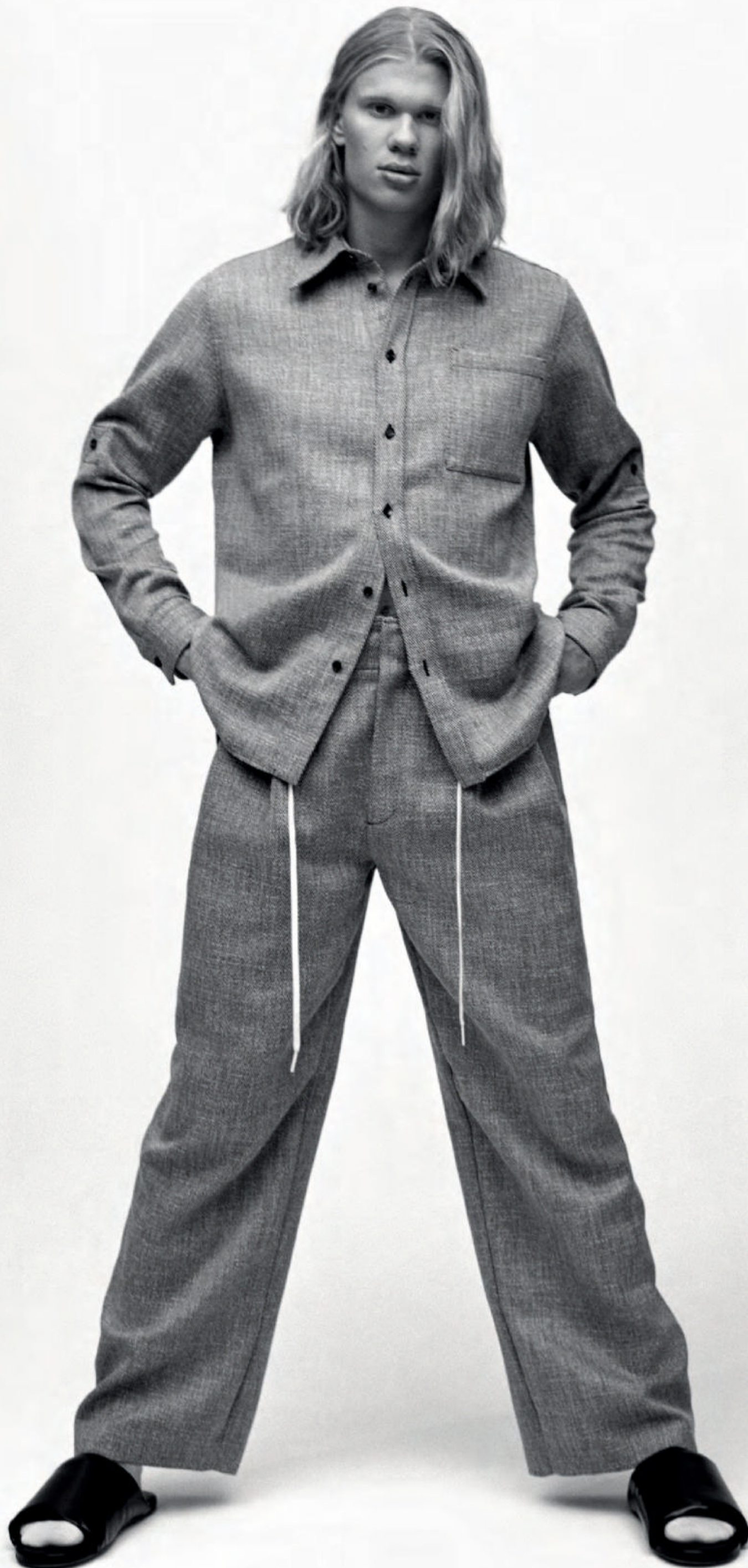
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backswing, a fizzing sand-wedge of shot hit so hard that the highlights are playing before the keeper knows what's happened.

But what is truly remarkable about Haaland, if you watch him closely, is his ability to disappear. Throughout the course of a game he'll hang off the shoulders of the opposition centre-backs, hiding in their blind spots, waiting patiently for an opportunity – and then suddenly he appears again, like an apparition, only this time he's a half-step ahead of the defender, goal-side, and the ball is in the net. All the best strikers do this, of course – but Haaland has elevated the craft to near-perfection. It's mesmerising to watch how many times in a game top-level defenders look genuinely shocked to see him, as if they've forgotten the giant Norwegian that they're there to mark is not only still on the pitch, but right beside them.

"I try to be a bit more smart, a bit more sharp, ahead of the people I play against," Haaland says, trying to explain it. "I try to be a bit more turned on in my head. Because if I do that, if I get one second, then I might be able to finish and he cannot block, for example. They think I go here and I go there" – he mimes a body fake to his right, before cutting left – "and I score. Things like this. It's something I'm always thinking of."

Haaland grew up watching other strikers obsessively, mimicking their movements, working out what made them unique. "From Zlatan to Van Persie to Vardy to Aguero, Messi," he says. "Negredo, Edin Dzeko, Balotelli..." Over time, he has picked up things from each of them. But he is particularly attuned to the mental side of the game. Scoring goals at the very top echelon of the sport is about more than physical attributes – it is equally a mental contest, a game built on confidence, calculus, outwitting your opponent. Says Haaland: "I think in the end, it's a lot about being aware in your mind."

ERLING HAALAND DIDN'T start out as a striker. As a child, he first played on the wing. "I was really fast," Haaland says. Although his scoring talents were by then already evident – it's said that his first touch at youth level led to a goal.

After the Haaland family left the UK and returned to Norway, they moved to Bryne, a small town on the country's west coast. There wasn't much for kids of Haaland's age to do in Bryne, particularly when the weather was cold and wet outside (which in Norway, during the winter, is most of the time). But the local team, Bryne FK, has an indoor pitch turfed with artificial grass, and Erling and his friends would spend their weekends there playing pick-up games – two on two, three on three – for hours. "When it was snowing outside, we trained inside," Haaland says. "It was a really important place for my life and my career."

Haaland has always been naturally athletic; not only is his father a former pro, his mother, Gry Marita Braut, is a former champion heptathlete. But as a child he was far from the

monstrous physical presence he is now. "He was skinny," says Alfe Ingve Berntsen, then a coach at Bryne FK, who trained Haaland through the youth ranks. Still, Haaland was naturally gifted and unnaturally dedicated, and pretty soon he was playing with kids a year or more older than he was. "He played against two centre-backs who were strong and fast, so he had to be clever in his movements, otherwise he wouldn't get a chance," Berntsen says. You can see it in videos on YouTube, many of which Bernsten filmed himself: Haaland ghosting through defences to reach a cross, or blasting the ball past the keeper from close range, the way he does now.

"I still try to do exactly the same things I did when I was 13 in my hometown," Haaland says. "I still do exactly the same runs. Show clips of me at 13 years old, you will see exactly the same thing."

Unlike many pro-athlete parents, Haaland's father Alfie avoided putting much pressure on Erling's burgeoning football career, and instead chose to keep his distance. "I learned a lot from training his older brother [Astor]," Alfie says. "There was a lot of attention around him, because he was my son; I don't think either me or him handled it very well. [Erling] was five years younger, but he wanted to play the game, and I could see the passion. So I stayed in the background, especially around the organised training – and the matches. I didn't say a word."

Berntsen, Haaland's former coach, likes to describe a football player as an edifice built on four pillars. "One of them is technical, one is tactical, one is physical, and one is mentality," he says. "If you are good, at 14 or 15 years old you have two of these four. If you have three out of four, that's very promising. We could tell Erling was very good with the technical, tactical, and mentality, and so the only part missing when he was 13 or 14 was the physical." But from looking at Haaland's older sibling, and his parents, the Bryne coaches knew that he would grow eventually. "I told him over and over, when he was down, 'Just wait; in four,

five years, you will be bigger and stronger than them. Relax,'" Berntsen says. "Now he has four out of four."

Haaland was around 16 when his growth spurt hit. "Honestly, my goal every day was to eat as much as I could, because I was growing a lot," he says. "I had a lot of growing pains in different places in my body."

He continued to grow on the pitch, too. At 15, he had been given his professional debut for Bryne FK; the following year, he signed with Molde, a side in Norway's top division. Not coincidentally, Molde was then being managed by Ole Gunnar Solskjaer, arguably the most famous striker that Norway has ever produced. (As Alfie Haaland puts it: "We thought, 'if you can't learn from him...'")

At Molde, Solskjaer helped Haaland develop the habits of a top predator, focusing on the finer details of finishing and movement. "The first thing I think he said to me was 'You have no idea how to head the ball. We have to work on that,'" Haaland says. So during practice, Solskjaer and his assistant coach would send in crosses for Haaland to head at goal. "This is what we did for two years, the whole period I was in Molde. And it was a good thing, because I couldn't hit the ball, and now I'm scoring goals with my head – thanks to them," Haaland says. The work paid dividends: after a slow start, Haaland scored 16 goals in 30 appearances in his second season at Molde. Soon, approaches started coming in from clubs all over Europe.

One of the advantages of having a former professional for a father is that by that time, Erling and Alfie had already been thinking strategically about potential moves. "We set up our targets three or four or five years ahead," Alfie says. "You know: 'if you can't tackle it in Molde, then you can't tackle it in Europe.'" As clubs started to show interest in Haaland – from Bayer Leverkusen and Hoffenheim in Germany, to Brugge and Ghent in Belgium, and even one of his father's former clubs, Leeds, in England – Haaland knew that he would need to pick his next destination intelligently. Few things stall a young player's career faster than riding the bench just for slightly more money. "I spoke in Molde with a psychologist about experience and he said, 'The one way to get experience is to be in the game and to play games,'" Haaland says. "I want to get experienced quite early, then I have to play games. I can't go to a place to sit on a bench forever."

In the January of 2019, Haaland chose to join Red Bull Salzburg – the dominant Austrian side that had just qualified for the Champions League, was known for playing youth, and happened to have a starting spot for a striker.

At Salzburg Haaland exploded, scoring 25 goals in just 23 appearances in a fluidly attacking side that also included the likes of Takumi Minamino and Hwang Hee-chan. But the game that really changed things didn't come until that autumn, in his Champions League debut against Genk.



**"I STILL TRY TO DO
EXACTLY THE SAME
THINGS I DID WHEN I WAS
13 IN MY HOMETOWN.
I STILL DO EXACTLY THE
SAME RUNS. SHOW CLIPS
OF ME AT 13 YEARS OLD,
YOU WILL SEE EXACTLY
THE SAME THING."**





Haaland scored in the second minute, and then again in the 34th, and again in the 45th. A first half hat-trick – the grandest of debuts, on club football’s biggest stage. In many ways, it seemed like a form of manifestation. Haaland is obsessed with the Champions League; he has long used the anthem as his alarm clock, and has in the past been filmed listening to it just driving around. (You have to wonder if this is a particularly successful case of desensitisation – transferring something that should be a source of nerves into a source of calm, even strength.)

“It was a crazy night,” Haaland says. Haaland’s family were at the stadium to watch. After the match, Erling went for a routine drug test, then joined them in the players’ lounge. “He finished about half past 11. We said, ‘OK, we’re going to go home, have a nice beer, have a nice wine,’” Alfie says. Erling drove them home himself. But rather than stay to celebrate, he got back in the car at 1am and drove to the training centre to do his recovery routine. “That’s when we realised he means business,” Alfie recalls.

Erling also saw that game as a turning point. “I was thinking after the game, like, ‘OK, you

know, what’s next?’ I cannot stop now. Now people actually start to look at me, I’m going to perform,” he says. “There was another game in three days, I think. For me it was important that I could keep doing this not only one time but several times.”

When Haaland finally made it home, around 3am, he found he couldn’t sleep for the adrenaline. After the game, he found that his notifications were going crazy. “That was the night things kind of blew up a bit,” he says. The news of his debut ricocheted around the footballing world. His Instagram followers skyrocketed. “That’s when I knew, ‘Oh wow, this is crazy. This is next level.’ I was buzzing.” He turned his notifications off.

IF THE GENK game was a breakthrough, it was less for the display of scoring prowess – Haaland having scored plenty before – than it was the stage that he displayed it on. The sheer balls of it. Another teenager facing their Champions

“I THINK IT’S A LOT IN YOUR HEAD, YOU KNOW – TO BE FOCUSED, TO BE READY, TO BE RELAXED IN YOUR HEAD. I THINK THAT’S ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT THINGS FOR A FOOTBALLER.”

League debut might have shrunk at the occasion. Many do. But the thing about Haaland that astonishes pundits and terrifies defenders above all is just that: he is unshakeable. Unflappable. The same thing happened when he moved to Borussia Dortmund in 2019. Haaland came off the bench in the second half and scored a hat-trick in 23 minutes. Premier League debut: two goals. In all, Haaland has scored on his debut in seven separate club competitions.

“He’s never afraid,” says Bernstein. “He doesn’t care who he’s going to play against.”

It’s a strange thing, confidence. For athletes – and none more than elite strikers – it is the trait desired above all others. In abundance, confidence is nuclear fusion: self-sustaining, with goals begetting goals begetting goals. But a sudden absence of it can doom a season and, over time, entire careers. The history of the Premier League alone is filled with expensive and highly esteemed strikers who failed to gel immediately, stuttered, and limped away bereft. It doesn’t take much for doubt to take hold: a falling out, a nagging injury, issues in one’s personal life. But Haaland? He seems to live in a world that is post-doubt. Like Ronnie O’Sullivan or Steph Curry, Haaland doesn’t shrink in the spotlight, but rather thrives on it. That’s where the cyborg comparisons come from – that sense he is unerring, unmoved. “I like to be under pressure,” he says, unfazed. “I like to be challenged.”

How one attains that state is less easily said. “I think a lot is [you’re] born with it,” he says. “I think it’s a lot in your head, you know – to be focused, to be ready, to be relaxed in your head. I think that’s one of the most important things for a footballer.”

It does not all come naturally. Haaland focuses on the mental side of the game more intently than most. A few years back, he garnered some attention for what has become his signature goal celebration: sliding into a lotus pose and closing his eyes, as if in a meditative

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trance. The celebration led to a wave of imitators (you can now do it in FIFA) as well as questions about his own meditation practice. “I think it’s a really good thing,” he says. “To relax, to try to not think too much. Because stress is not good for anyone. I hate to be stressed, and I try not to be stressed. But the concept of meditation is to try to let go of these kinds of thoughts. It’s really individual, but for me it’s worked really well.”

Haaland came to meditation not by accident, but through his own continued efforts at self-improvement. (“He’s very curious, even outside football, of how you can become better,” Alfie says.) He often wears blue-light-filtering glasses in the evening, for example, to prevent screens from interfering with his sleep; for the same reason, he switches his Wi-Fi off at night. “I’m really focused on sleep,” Haaland says. “For me maybe the most important thing in life is sleep – not only a lot, but good sleep.”

In person, Haaland emanates a sort of yogic calm; it would not surprise you to find out that he has at least partially transcended. But then he lives a life of almost monk-like discipline: he doesn’t go out much. He doesn’t really play FIFA. He doesn’t watch a lot of movies. “I get this question, ‘What do you do?’ I really don’t do a lot,” he says, genuinely seeming perplexed by the question. “I wake up in the morning at breakfast and I come here. After that I have my treatment. The day is almost gone; I go home, I relax and prepare for the next training, make some dinner and then I go to sleep.”

He does not practise visualisation, as some players do ahead of important matches.

“I don’t think too much about the game before the game,” he says. “I try to live here and now, not trying to think of what happened yesterday, what’s going to happen tomorrow.”

One of the core principles of yogic meditation and mindfulness is the idea of unburdening oneself: to release negative thoughts, to try and let go of things that might make you angry or upset, in order to appreciate the now. This, one senses, is one of Haaland’s great strengths: his ability to shed self-doubt, the way an ascetic sheds possessions. He is one of the most intensely watched and highly paid athletes in the world, one with the hopes of millions of fans and his entire nation upon him, and he just... rolls with it. As if he doesn’t even notice.

“Sometimes I’m really like... I don’t know the word in English.”

In your own world?

He smiles. Agrees. “Not in this world.”

IT IS IN part that mindset that Manchester City were buying when they signed Haaland for such a monster salary (£865,000 a week, if you believe the reports in the tabloids) this past summer. While City have been the dominant team in English football for the past half-decade, they have as yet failed to secure European football’s most coveted prize. Since Pep Guardiola joined the club as head coach in 2016, City have been ignominiously

dumped out of the Champions League in the knock-out stages every year – making it as far as the final in 2021, but no further. Over time, they have gained a reputation, earned or not, of choking – whether that is down to odd tactical choices, lack of confidence, or just bad luck. Mentally, something has been missing.

Signing Haaland is thought in many corners to be the final piece of that puzzle – the clinical finisher missing from an otherwise near-perfect team of expensively assembled parts. I ask Haaland if he thinks that it’s true that City have lacked something mentally at these crucial moments.

“Honestly, I don’t think so,” he says. “Sometimes, like the game against Real Madrid last year, when you see the goal Rodrygo scores – where Asensio heads the ball and misses it, and it hits Rodrygo’s leg and goes in the goal – sometimes I think actually there is a God up there who decides these things,” he says. “This mentality kind of thing, Madrid knowing that they’ve won it before? I don’t know if that’s a thing. Maybe.”

That, typically, doesn’t faze him. “I will try to do everything in my power to win trophies here with Manchester City and to try to be the game changer,” he says. “My goal is to win the Champions League, hopefully.”

There are similar expectations at home in Norway, who despite failing to qualify for the World Cup are stocked with an upcoming generation of talent: Arsenal’s Martin Ødegaard, Napoli’s Leo Østigård, Brentford’s Kristoffer Ajer. “Norway is a small, small nation; 5.5 million, I think less. So we’re not a big nation. But again, you see at the World Cup small nations that do fantastic things,” he says. “We hope to qualify [in 2026], that’s my biggest goal with them. Hopefully one day I will get to play knockout games with Norway.”

At the time of going to press, Haaland has

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21 goals in the Premier League, eight more than England captain Harry Kane in second place. Failing an unprecedented drop in form or serious injury, he has the Golden Boot race sewn up – even if the title race is proving more open. Should he keep it up, his name will surely be among those mentioned

at year’s end in the voting for the Ballon d’Or, football’s most prestigious individual prize.

I ask if he cares about winning it one day. “I think everybody cares. But I don’t think it’s a good thing to think about this. If you and your team is playing really well, you will perform well, you will begin to win trophies, [and] you will probably be on the list. Like De Bruyne was – he was third place, I think well deserved, by the way. But yeah, you cannot think of these kinds of things.”

The stupefying thing about watching Haaland is how young he is; realistically, we may have another decade-plus of him operating at this level. “Look at Benzema, he is 35 now and I think even better,” Haaland says. “So in 12 years I hope to be even better than I am now.”

Given a certain Argentinian is nearing the end of his career, it’s not hard to look at Haaland and Kylian Mbappé – realistically the only other forward as good in world football – as the two players most likely to dominate the next decade of the Ballon d’Or, and club football’s biggest stage. Both of them have already outscored Messi and Ronaldo at their respective ages; here, then, is perhaps the next great rivalry in the sport. It’s electrifying to witness.

The only real threat to Haaland shattering every Premier League scoring record, you’d imagine, is injury – something that Haaland has some experience with. His father, Alfie, had to retire at 30 due to a series of knee injuries. I ask if that worries him. The fragility of it all.

“I don’t think you should walk around being worried about things. I don’t think that’s a good way of thinking, so I don’t worry about getting injured. Injury is a part of our job. I will probably get injured in my life again. Hopefully not – you never know what will happen in this game of football. It’s a dangerous sport.”

He says this with the same kind of calm that he does almost everything else: a wry smile, big, clear eyes, his hair shining like he’s stuck in a ’90s shampoo advert. This is Haaland’s power, the cyborg in action. “In Norwegian we have a saying like, ‘Life is not glowing every single day.’ Some days are worse than others, and that’s just how life is,” he says. “I think I’m really good at that – letting go of things, and to not give a...”

Haaland hesitates; he’s being careful not to swear, having been chastised for it in previous interviews. “To relax into it. Enjoy your life, because life is short.” ❧

OLIVER FRANKLIN-WALLIS *is* GQ’s features editor.

THE FAMILY

HOW ONE MEMBER OF THE NDRANGHETA - THE NOTORIOUS CALABRIAN MAFIA WHOSE ILLICIT EMPIRE EXPANDS ACROSS
ITALY AND THE GLOBE - TURNED ON HIS OWN RELATIVES.

BY FRANCISCO GARCIA

ILLUSTRATIONS BY PRISCILLA COLEMAN



ON 17 JUNE 2018, FROM THE CONFINES OF HIS CELL IN CATANZARO PRISON, ITALY, EMANUELE MANCUSO STARTED TO WRITE A LETTER. FOR WEEKS, MANCUSO HAD BEEN LOCKED UP, AWAITING TRIAL FOR MASTERMINDING A MULTIMILLION-EURO CANNABIS PLANTATION IN THE REMOTE CALABRIAN HILLS. THOUGH THE CHARGES WERE SERIOUS, THEY ALONE WEREN'T ENOUGH TO FAZE MANCUSO, WHO AT 30 YEARS OLD WAS A LIFELONG MEMBER OF THE 'NDRANGHETA, THE CALABRIAN MAFIA. "I WOULD HAVE [LIKELY] SPENT A COUPLE OF YEARS IN PRISON AND A COUPLE MORE UNDER HOUSE ARREST," MANCUSO TOLD ME RECENTLY. LIGHT ENOUGH WORK FOR SOMEONE USED TO PINBALLING IN AND OUT OF THE ITALIAN JUSTICE SYSTEM SINCE HIS LATE TEENS.

THE 'NDRANGHETA IS one of the most notorious and feared mafia groups in Italy and the world. Its cells have spread from its heartland in southern Italy, from Europe to Colombia, Melbourne to Montreal. At home, the mob's presence is felt at every level of civic life, from regional politics to refuse collection. "All formal decisions come from Calabria. The power and the orders," Emanuele Mancuso says. Once considered the poorest and most backward of Italy's three dominant mafias, the 'Ndrangheta is now universally acknowledged as a global behemoth, with an estimated annual turnover of £44 billion – more than McDonald's and Deutsche Bank combined.

Emanuele was intimately familiar with the mafia's operations, for a simple reason: it's the family business. The Mancusos are one of the most powerful families in the 'Ndrangheta; the clan's leader, Luigi Mancuso, is Emanuele's uncle. Many of his siblings and cousins work for the mafia, many of them notorious criminals in their own rights. Emanuele himself had been working for the 'Ndrangheta since he was a boy. For decades, he had done the family's bidding, committing petty crimes and more violent ones, working his way up the clan's hierarchy, until his arrest in 2018.

But, sitting in his prison cell, something changed. His partner Nancy was heavily pregnant with their first child, a baby girl. In Emanuele's telling, the imminent arrival clarified doubts that had been growing from the moment he saw the first ultrasound. The news had triggered something in him, as if his entire past was being refocused in real time. He wanted his little girl to have a chance at a different life, one free of the violence and corruption that had marked his own since birth. And so, in the early hours of 17 June, he decided to write a letter that went against everything he'd ever known. Its contents were short, the message direct. Emanuele wanted to collaborate with the Italian state. And he was looking to start immediately.

TO UNDERSTAND THE 'Ndrangheta (the name is thought to mean "society of men of honour"), you need to talk about power. "This is not a gang and these are not your ordinary petty criminals," Emanuele says. It's important, he explains, to think bigger. "Social power and economic power. Criminal power. But high level and extremely sophisticated. Power that has links with the whole of Italy and Europe, as well as South America." Enough power to corrupt and disfigure almost anything it comes up against, whether individual or institutional.

The 'Ndrangheta's origins trace back to the mid-19th century in rural Calabria (the toe in the boot of Italy), one of the country's poorest regions. Today, it commands a vast criminal portfolio, ranging from old-fashioned extortion to high-level corruption and weapons trafficking. It is drugs, however, that account for the majority of their staggering wealth. Specifically cocaine: 80 per cent of the European trade is thought to be controlled by a constellation of tight-knit clans across Calabria. The Mancuso clan, which rose to power in the 1970s, is known to control the province of Vibo Valentia, on Calabria's west coast. Their power comes in part from their reputed influence over the Port of Gioia Tauro, Italy's biggest container port and one of the key staging points for cocaine entering Europe from Latin America.

Unlike the Sicilian Cosa Nostra or the Neapolitan Camorra, blood ties are everything inside the 'Ndrangheta, which has historically made cultivating informants in their ranks a notoriously difficult feat. In 2008, figures from the Italian government suggested that just 42 'Ndranghetisti were known to have broken *omertà*, the infamous vow of silence and loyalty. (For the Cosa Nostra and Camorra Pentiti, that number is estimated at more than 1,000 and 2,000 respectively.) Inside the clan, that loyalty is enforced by fear – and the promise of swift violence. The

Previous page: former 'Ndrangheta member Emanuele Mancuso lays out his story to his defence lawyer before one of the highest-security trials in Italian history.

consequences of switching sides are no secret. In 2011, a young mother died in agony after allegedly being forced to drink hydrochloric acid by her 'Ndranghetisti family after she was accused of talking to police. Other suspected informants have received a bullet to the head, or simply disappeared from their homes.

To be a Mancuso is also about power – the power to dominate and control. At least, that's the education that Emanuele received as a boy growing up in Limbadi, a small village surrounded by rolling hills and picturesque olive and citrus groves. Like much of Calabria, its economic prospects are generally dire. In 2020, unemployment across the region stood at 20 per cent. Infrastructure is poor or non-existent. For many in Limbadi, the Mancusos are the state, or at least its most visible alternative. "If you need a job, the clan finds you one in half an hour," Emanuele explains. "The state doesn't find you one. If your car is stolen and you go to the police, they might find it in a month or two, in the very best case scenario. With the clan, it's a quarter of an hour. That's the power that they have."

In April 2018, the municipality of Limbadi was declared unfit for purpose and dissolved – not for the first time – by decree of Italy's central government, due to mafia infiltration. This isn't simply a Limbadi problem. As an infamous leaked 2008 cable from the US diplomatic service in Naples put it, so thoroughly had the 'Ndrangheta corrupted the civic life of its home region that "[if] it were not a part of Italy, Calabria would be a failed state".

When I visited Calabria, last October, I stopped by the UniRiMI Rossella Casini, an anti-mafia research institute, in the heart of Limbadi. Its founder, an avuncular priest named Don Ennio Stamile, showed me round the spacious headquarters, a bright, airy building that backs onto a view of rolling green hills. The villa belonged to the Mancuso clan until it was confiscated by the state in 2018. Just inside the main doors hangs a multicoloured painting of Rossella Casini, a student at the University of Florence who was disappeared by the 'Ndrangheta in 1981, aged 24, after convincing her Calabrian boyfriend to collaborate with state officials; the institute is named in her honour.

Stamile spends much of his time here, in a town where the Mancuso family still holds deep influence. The 57-year-old refuses police protection, despite having received numerous threats over the years. Anonymous phone calls and menacing letters have become a fact of life; in 2012, he discovered a severed pig's head outside his front door. But he has refused to be intimidated. In his words, it is everyone's duty to resist the 'Ndrangheta. "It is people who will make a difference. Good people," he says. "That's why it is important to fight."

FROM CHILDHOOD, EMANUELE knew his family was different. His father Pantaleone, a well-connected mafia boss better known by his alias "The Engineer", spent much of Emanuele's youth in prisons across Italy. Police would

regularly raid the family home, whether Pantaleone was there or not. At school, Emanuele could feel the wariness from his classmates and teachers. Neither he nor his younger brother Giuseppe were disciplined when they misbehaved. Their fellow villagers would stay silent when they were caught throwing stones at passing cars.

What Emanuele calls "the indoctrination" started young, almost from the cradle. Being a Mancuso, particularly an eldest son, came with a series of non-negotiable values drilled in at home. Family was everything. Problems were to be settled with force, whenever threats failed. "I was taught not to trust [teachers]," Emanuele says. "You never asked for help. Institutions were the enemy." Violence was too routine to be remarked upon. By his early teens, the suffocating pressure at home had transformed Emanuele into a troubled, rebellious boy who had already begun to chafe against his family's expectations. It was different for his younger brother Giuseppe, a gun-loving "natural criminal" who enthusiastically bought into what Emanuele dubs "the mafia mentality". "If he's at ten, then I'm one", he says about his brother. "My parents noticed this and preferred [him]." (The wider Mancuso family did not respond to requests for comment.)

Emanuele Mancuso is no stranger to violence, as he freely admits. His first arrest came at 17, after he assaulted a local Limbadi businessman who had refused an extortion attempt; the crime saw him locked up for nearly four months. Emanuele didn't deal with incarceration well. He felt weak, he says, and vulnerable. In 2009, the then 21-year-old was sent north to Rome after whispers that police were planning to open a fresh investigation into him. The news followed on the heels of an internal conflict within the 'Ndrangheta, which had escalated into a series of tit-for-tat shootings, with his brother and uncle Luigi pitted against a group of their cousins. "Three people nearly died. To calm the situation, my father took a house and [bought] a bar [in Rome]. We all moved for two years. My whole [immediate] family."

Rome came as a revelation to Emanuele, by then a young man who had barely left Calabria aside from snatched prison visits to see his father. He enrolled at Sapienza University to study for a diploma in agricultural science, a choice he describes as a diversion designed to throw off any prying eyes watching from back home. It was in Rome that Emanuele met Nancy Chimmiri, a pretty fellow Calabrian four years his junior, who came from a working-class family (her father was a postman, her mother a housewife). There was never any ambiguity about his family, Emanuele stresses. Nancy knew exactly who he was and where he came from. Even so, their relationship began to blossom.

It was only after they had moved back home to Calabria that the two became a formal couple, in April 2012. Emanuele continued to work for the family. He was always good for a favour: jobs, money, whatever, Emanuele could always sort it. When Nancy had a car accident, the other driver hastily dropped the claim when they heard about the Mancuso connection; they even offered to pay Nancy damages for the inconvenience. There was no doubt about it, Emanuele says. "The poor guy got screwed."

As the years passed, Nancy grew closer and closer to the family. She took to the claustrophobic climate of suspicion like a natural, according to Emanuele. "She knew everything and saw everything. She did everything. She got on with everybody. She's a big personality. She's strong and determined. Devious. She was a Mancuso."

Though often eclipsed by his younger brother, Emanuele gradually began to carve out his own niche within the family.



**A YOUNG MOTHER DIED
AFTER BEING FORCED TO
DRINK HYDROCHLORIC
ACID. OTHER INFORMANTS
RECEIVED A BULLET TO THE HEAD OR
DISAPPEARED FROM THEIR HOMES.**

He had always been technically minded, and in the early 2010s became the internal go-to guy for anti-surveillance hardware, investing tens of thousands of euros in instruments to detect wiretaps and GPS trackers for relatives and other clan members. Then there was the marijuana, “the green gold”, as he puts it. Back in Calabria, Emanuele put his agricultural studies to good use. In 2014, he set up a weed farm in the hills of Vibo Valentia, cultivated by a group of migrant workers from outside the EU. Production was overseen by drone. At its peak, Emanuele and his associates were making millions in profit a year for the family. When the farm was eventually busted after a lengthy police operation, Italian police confiscated over 25,000 plants, with an estimated value of £15 million. “I dedicated my life to those plants,” says Emanuele. “I became an expert. It was a very reliable market.” And business was good, right up until his arrest on the morning of 8 March 2018.

When Nancy became pregnant, both she and Emanuele were convinced that it was going to be a boy. It was impossible to imagine anything else. Just another little Mancuso boss in waiting. The same month that Emanuele was arrested, Nancy went for her first ultrasound scan, which revealed a girl. For Emanuele, then being held at Reggio prison before his transfer to Catanzaro, the news that he was expecting a girl changed everything. He wanted to change, he says. To be a good father. A present father – one who didn’t spend his daughter’s life boomeranging in and out of high security prisons. When a heavily pregnant Nancy came to visit him, seeing her bump was “a moment of weakness.” They exchanged long emotional letters. As the months passed, his visions of a fresh start grew more vivid. On 16 June, a long letter from Nancy arrived. It explained how much she loved him and how sorry it made her to see him living the way he was. Emanuele Mancuso took it as a sign. The next day he wrote the short, explosive note to the Catanzaro Antimafia Directorate, agreeing to cooperate. The baby, Lucia* Mancuso, was born a week later, on 25 June – straight into the middle of a family that was already tearing itself apart.

WHEN THE NEWS of Emanuele’s defection arrived at the Catanzaro Antimafia Directorate, staff initially laughed it off. No Mancuso had ever been willing to spill the previously impenetrable secrets of one of the most powerful and ruthless mafia clans in Italy, let alone the eldest son of one of its most important factions. The very concept seemed absurd.

Any levity evaporated the following day, after Anna Maria Frustaci, a young anti-mafia prosecutor, held a face-to-face meeting with Emanuele in the early hours of the morning. It immediately became clear that he wasn’t bullshitting, and that he knew what he was getting himself into. Emanuele knew that his decision would immediately sever ties with his family and confer instant pariah status back home. It would also come wrapped up with a mandatory death sentence, or at least the promise of a lifetime spent perpetually looking over both shoulders.

When the call came through from Catanzaro prison, Antonia Nicolini didn’t need to think twice. At first, Nicolini, a defence lawyer, was only told that a prisoner had decided to collaborate. On arrival, she was introduced to Emanuele Mancuso. Her first impression was of a dog-tired young man who seemed to be rapidly approaching the end of his tether. The room was crowded with figures from the prosecutor’s office and the local police. A number of other lawyers had turned Emanuele down, Nicolini told me, citing “incompatibility”. He suspected it had something to do with his surname. But Nicolini wasn’t scared or overawed about his



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family connections, having previously represented state witnesses, and having grown up with two uncles high up in the carabinieri, the Italian military police. Instead, she told me, she felt a sense of responsibility towards the figure sitting in front of her.

For Emanuele, the situation inside jail had deteriorated quickly. At the time, Giuseppe Mancuso was also in Catanzaro prison and word of his brother’s collaboration soon reached him via a couple of corrupt guards. The threats began. Emanuele says that he wasn’t naive; he knew his family’s reaction would be swift and merciless. They let it be known that they could easily find pliant lawyers and doctors to certify he was too unwell to collaborate. That he was mad, a drug addict, or both. Emanuele’s mother, Giovanna, even made an appointment with Nicolini at her office. The lawyer stresses it wasn’t about threatening her, but instead sending a message to Emanuele indirectly. “They said that he needed looking after and wasn’t to be taken seriously. He needed to be cured,” Nicolini remembers. She didn’t agree. She saw a lucid and intelligent young man who was realistic about his predicament and increasingly steadfast in his belief in the decision he had taken.

Those first few days carried a surreal quality for Emanuele. He was moved to solitary confinement, after scandalised word began to travel that the eldest Mancuso boy was about to sing. Emanuele’s thoughts, however, were somewhere else, fixed on Nancy and his daughter. But the next time he saw Nancy, he says, it was like being visited by a different person. Any of the old warmth was gone. She brought a message from the family and told him that she had no intention of leaving Calabria, or of allowing him custody of Lucia without a fight. If he recanted, however, there would be a reward: after serving his sentence, the family could set him, Nancy and Lucia up with a new life in Spain, with a cushy business and a couple of million in the bank. But when Emanuele refused, the threats began to change tone. Photos arrived of the baby being cradled in Giuseppe’s arms back in Vibo Valentia. The meaning was obvious. The child was theirs – and there was nothing Emanuele could do about it.

AFTER AGREEING TO give detailed testimony, Emanuele was moved into police protection. There, he quickly began to provide prosecutors with what they had been desperate for: the inside track on the Mancuso family, the Calabrian ’Ndrangheta, and their most violent secrets. Italian anti-mafia police had been trying to bring the Mancusos to justice, with only sporadic success, for decades. But due to *omertà*, little evidence had escaped from inside the family. Emanuele, however, had information that no other witness could provide: details, dates, and people, set down with painstaking accuracy. He could name names, such as in the case of a drugs trafficker who killed a woman and allegedly fed her body to pigs.

Emanuele’s story was so explosive he had to be moved to solitary confinement for his own protection.





In the early hours of 19 December 2019, Italian anti-mafia police launched one of the biggest operations in its history. Around 3,000 officers from the elite *cacciatori* (literally, “the hunters”) participated in raids across Italy, Switzerland, Germany, and Bulgaria. Suspects were plucked from bunkers and hidden trap doors, from man-hole covers and behind sliding staircases. One suspect was allegedly caught after officers followed a stray plume of cigarette smoke coming from an abandoned house in a half deserted village. In total, detectives arrested around 330 people, and seized an estimated £13.5 million in cash and property. Nicola Gratteri, the esteemed anti-mafia prosecutor who led the investigation, claimed that the dawn raids had “completely dismembered the ranks of the Mancuso family.” The operation had been informed, in part, by Emanuele’s testimony.

When the trial began in January 2021, its sheer scale attracted worldwide coverage. Every story was invariably accompanied by mention of Emanuele Mancuso, the mafia princeling who had committed the unthinkable and crossed the criminal divide. Though the ’Ndrangheta had been on trial before, there had never been anything like this. A total of 355 defendants, 900 prosecution witnesses and a small army of lawyers and journalists all passed through “The Bunker”, a heavily fortified converted call centre on the outskirts of Lamezia Terme, a small city around half an hour’s drive from Catanzaro prison. Spread over 3,300 square metres, upon completion it became the largest courtroom in the western world. When in session, soldiers with machine guns patrolled its perimeter alongside a phalanx of armoured vehicles. Inside, the charges ranged from murder and extortion to drug trafficking, loan sharking and the abuse of public office. Defendants included notorious Mancuso clan members as well as their white-collar enablers, including lawyers, bankers and corrupt politicians. Among them, a wave of Emanuele Mancuso’s old acquaintances and relatives, damned by his explosive testimony.

To date, over 70 convictions have already been handed down, though the trial still has at least a year to run. Many of the highest-profile cases are still waiting to be heard, including that of Emanuele’s uncle, Luigi, the clan’s notorious de facto boss. Excitable comparisons have been made with the famous 1986 “maxi-trial”, which decimated an entire generation of the Sicilian Cosa Nostra and led to the murders of legendary anti-mafia prosecutors Giovanni Falcone and Paolo Borsellino in July 1992.

More than four and a half years after writing that letter in 2018, Emanuele lives a peripatetic life under state protection, moving between a series of anonymous addresses across Italy. Time has taken on a strange, uneven rhythm. Here one day, perhaps gone the next, sometimes at a moment’s notice. Strict limits are placed on where he can go and who he can see. Armed guards are never more

Emanuele’s gamble on telling all about the ’Ndrangheta has meant living life under police protection, with limited access to his daughter.

than a couple of minutes away. His ongoing testimony in the trial is given via video link from a secure location, though he occasionally meets Calabria’s anti-mafia prosecution team in person. I spoke to him exclusively by Skype; Emanuele looked tired, with dark rings of exhaustion under his eyes. He chain-smoked as we talked, having spent the morning tidying his apartment in preparation for one of the weekly visits from Lucia, who is now four.

After Emanuele rejected his family’s offers to retract his confession, the threats began to change tone, a process that accelerated as their attempts to rubbish his credibility failed. According to a report in *The Times*, the clan put a €1 million bounty on his head. Nancy and Lucia were moved to a state-run foster home outside Calabria, though Nancy remains in close contact with the Mancusos, including his father and brother. Emanuele and his lawyer have fought a long-running campaign to increase his visitation rights, with little success. He continues to share custody of Lucia; until recently, his access was limited to no more than a few hours a week. That, he told me, has been the toughest part to take. It is, Emanuele says, why he has felt “abandoned by the state”, despite his sacrifices.

Even in the face of the threats and continuing scare tactics, Emanuele says that the government refuses to listen. He has long suspected his family of exerting pressure on social services, as well as the family court. It’s the only explanation, he says, why things are continuing to play out the way they have, leaving him stuck in limbo between two opposing forces. There have been times over the past few years where he has packed a suitcase and threatened to leave protection in order to see Lucia. It’s the only way anyone seems to listen. “The back and forth [just] isn’t viable. They know she is being indoctrinated by my family,” he says.

Though technically a free man, Emanuele’s new reality doesn’t conform to many people’s idea of liberty. “I thought [the state] would look after my daughter’s rights and my rights as a father,” he says. Instead, “they have left and abandoned me. I am free but imprisoned in the house.” His days are almost entirely empty, aside from the weekly visits from Lucia. A few hours of joy, followed by crushing emptiness. “If the state isn’t integrating me back into society, then what can I offer my daughter?”

Emanuele’s relations with the wider Mancuso clan remain hostile. The same is true when it comes to Nancy. She remains, Emanuele says, a Mancuso in all but name – though one wonders what other options are available to her, considering the mafia’s well-documented ruthlessness against transgressors, including women. For as long as he continues to collaborate, Emanuele represents the despised forces of the state, and is therefore putting himself, and his family, at risk.

As for the ’Ndrangheta, even the most optimistic observer would tell you that it will take more than a single trial, however historic, to fully slay a monster so deeply entangled in Calabrian life. But these are still steps forward, Emanuele says. If he has a message, it would be that change is possible. “We need a culture of honesty. It’s important that families, schools and politicians create a culture of honesty and respect and legality. That’s the only way.”

Although he finds it hard not to be pessimistic about his own future, Emanuele says he still has high hopes for Lucia. He dreams about how her life will be different from his own. He would be delighted, he says, if his daughter grew up to be an anti-mafia prosecutor. ✖

FRANCISCO GARCIA is a writer and journalist based in London.



THE SCALE OF THE TRIAL ATTRACTED WORLDWIDE COVERAGE. EVERY STORY MENTIONED EMANUELE MANCUSO, THE MAFIA PRINCELING WHO HAD CROSSED THE DIVIDE.

*NAME HAS BEEN CHANGED.

SEARCHING

As tennis's Big Three gradually loosen their grip on the sport, a new generation is emerging on the men's tour. *GQ* goes courtside in Paris with a crew of friends and rivals, all clamouring for their first grand slam singles title – and a shot at superstardom.

BY SAMUEL HINE
PHOTOGRAPHS
BY ILYA LIPKIN
STYLED BY
JAY MASSACRET



Matteo Berrettini.
Opposite page: Félix
Auger-Aliassime.

FOR A SLAM

THE

NEW GENERATION OF elite men's tennis players is a small, tight-knit group. With a pro tour that stretches from January through November, and from Melbourne to New York, Tokyo to Monte Carlo, they spend a lot of time together, chatting in locker rooms, ice baths, and hotel restaurants – as well as in group chats that date back to their early teenage years. They talk about tennis, mostly. And lately, the conversations have revolved around a new line of speculation: Which one of them is up next? In other words, as the 25-year-old American rising star Frances Tiafoe put it to me recently, “Who’s going to be the guy out of our group to win a grand slam, and then continue to win grand slams and be at the top of the game?”

The crop of players in contention to be that guy has arrived like an answered prayer. For the better part of the past two decades, tennis was dominated by the so-called Big Three: Rafael Nadal, Roger Federer, and Novak Djokovic. From 2004 to last year’s US Open, the trio won 62 out of 75 grand slams, the historic and moneyed quartet of tournaments that make or break legacies. But by the end of last year, Federer had retired, Nadal had begun to grapple with ever-more-frequent injuries, and an unvaccinated Djokovic’s major appearances had become contingent on travel rules and restrictions.

Consequently, there’s something of a vacancy at the top of the sport – an opening for a superstar (or a few) to set himself apart, just as a dynamic mix of creative young players are coming into their own. To survey that new bevy of talent, *GQ* travelled last autumn to the Paris Masters, one of the tour’s most prestigious tournaments outside the slams, where the game’s top players were vying for one of the last trophies of the year. Gathered in an athletic club in the city’s Left Bank on the eve of the event, seven of the draw’s hottest talents joked, gossiped and discussed the year their generation broke out, and what might lie ahead. “2022 was one of the first years where I felt like, going into the really big tournaments, anyone could win,” Taylor Fritz, a 25-year-old baseliner from San Diego, told me. According to Tiafoe, the gap between the top players and the rest of the field has all but vanished. “It’s getting wild, man,” he said. “If you don’t come correct, you can get it from anybody.”

Tiafoe knows this better than anyone. At last year’s US Open, he had the misfortune of drawing a fourth-round match against Nadal. Going into their contest, Nadal, despite his injuries, was still undefeated in major matches in over a year, and he’d beaten Tiafoe in two previous meetings. Then Tiafoe, the son of a janitor at a tennis academy in Maryland, took the Spaniard down in four sets of furious shot-making. “I never knew if I was going to beat one of those dudes,” Tiafoe said of the Big Three. Now, Nadal might be entertaining similar doubts. A few months after the Open, Tiafoe and compatriot Jack Sock vanquished Nadal and Federer in a match that sealed the Swiss legend’s retirement. Said Tiafoe, “I don’t believe in flukes.”

Fans of the Big Three might argue that seeing their favourite players destroy the competition since the beginning of the George W. Bush administration has been plenty exciting. But the ATP Tour and tournament organisers have recognised a need for new energy, as evidenced by the camera crews filming the emerging stars for *Break Point*, a Netflix series produced by the company behind *Drive to Survive*, which transformed Formula One into a global

Félix Auger-Aliassime

« (Opening pages, left)

Nation: **Canada**

Age: **22**

Don’t let his gentlemanly demeanour fool you: Auger-Aliassime has a reputation for ferocity on court, hitting the fuzz off every ball that comes his way. At the end of the 2022 season, he rode a streaky stretch to win three straight tournaments; he clinched the third, at the Swiss Indoors, without dropping a single service game, and fell to the baseline in exhausted bliss after opponent Holger Rune hit the final point long. Said the Canadian, “When I saw the ball go out, for a second I didn’t feel my legs under me. It’s tough to describe, but it’s a moment in time where you just don’t know where you are anymore. You lose yourself and you feel like you’re floating. Then, of course, you get up and shake hands. But those few seconds, when you see the ball go out: it’s special.”

Matteo Berrettini

« (Opening pages, right)

Nation: **Italy**

Age: **26**

Having gone to high school rather than a tennis academy, and having almost played college tennis in the States, Berrettini is considered one of the more well-adjusted players on tour. “Maybe I would have been a nice engineer,” he said, if he had ended up going to college as he once planned. Now, he’s a perennial major threat with a Wimbledon final appearance under his belt and a Hugo Boss modelling contract in hand. So, what’s more taxing: a five-set match, or a 12-hour Boss campaign shoot in the Dubai desert? “Five sets,” he said. “It’s the most stressful.”

←←
OPENING PAGES, LEFT

ON FÉLIX
AUGER-ALIASSIME
jacket £1,150
trousers £630
Dior Men

t-shirt £28 **Adidas**
trainers £140
Adidas Originals
by Wales Bonner
sunglasses £385
Cutler and Gross

OPENING PAGES, RIGHT
ON MATTEO BERRETTINI
jacket £199 shorts £179
trainers £199 socks £16
for pack of four **Boss**

stylist’s own tank top
Uniqlo

compression shorts,
vintage

watch and jewellery,
his own

Frances Tiafoe

(Opposite page) »

Nation: **USA**

Age: **25**

Some players melt under the bright lights of centre court, especially during grand slams. Not Tiafoe, who provided one of the 2022 season’s most indelible highlights when he defeated Rafael Nadal in front of 23,000 fans in the US Open round of 16. “I’ve always loved high-stakes moments,” said Tiafoe. “I like being front and centre.” The child of immigrants from Sierra Leone, Tiafoe grew up playing at a tennis academy in Maryland, where his father was on the maintenance staff; a young Tiafoe sometimes slept in his dad’s office after beating balls against a wall for hours. Following the retirement of his friend Serena Williams, Tiafoe sees it as his duty to carry on the GOAT’s mission. “I want to change the way the game’s looked at. You get this, ‘Tennis is posh, prissy, a country club sport’. I want to bring some flavour to the game.”



ON FRANCES TIAFOE
vintage shirt
Wrangler
tank top
(price upon request)
Bottega Veneta
trousers
£1,350 **Zegna**
watch £11,200
Cartier
jewellery, his own

Stefanos Tsitsipas

Nation: **Greece**

Age: **24**

A phenom with wanderlust, Tsitsipas carries a handheld video camera everywhere he goes to record travel vlogs, and posts his landscape photography on Instagram in between tennis clips. To a greater degree than most players, he keeps to himself. “I would love to have friends on tour,” he said. “I just don’t feel like I relate to a lot of them, in terms of how I approach life.” Before getting elbow surgery in late 2021 to deal with nagging pain, Tsitsipas wasn’t sure if his career would extend beyond his mid-20s. But he quickly returned to his top form, playing, he said, “with lots of desire, with lots of passion, with lots of dexterity and no feeling of doubt – just pure me out on the court.”

→
ON STEFANOS
TSITSIPAS
coat (price
upon request)
Versace
shirt £250
Our Legacy
stylist’s own
tank top
Uniqlo
trousers £45
Adidas
boots (price
upon request)
**Bottega
Veneta**
socks £360
Dior Men





Stefanos
Tsitsipas

phenomenon (Box to Box Films is also at work on a series inside the world of pro golf). The young players certainly see an upside to letting Netflix into their lives: “Hopefully, it can do for tennis what it did for F1,” Fritz told me, as a boom mic hovered a few feet above his head. Added Tiafoe, “How are we going to get younger fans to tune in? I think the game needs different faces and personalities to be shown.”

Casper Ruud, a 24-year-old Norwegian forehand specialist who reached two major finals last year, pondered how much tennis has changed of late. “When I was younger and looked up to the best players on tour, there was a period where there was no teenager inside [the top world 100],” he said. Now, there are two in the top 15, including 19-year-old Carlos Alcaraz, the Spanish world number one, who downed Ruud in last year’s US Open.

What some younger players occasionally lack in maturity – the ATP is considering whether to raise fines to curb a spate of on-court tantrums – they make up for in their speed and shot-making. “Everyone is getting physically stronger and harder to play,” said Holger Rune, the second-most highly ranked teen, a week before he dispatched Djokovic with a three-set comeback in the Paris Masters final. “We needed to get our arses kicked by them in order to learn and grow, and be much more complete in what we do,” said Stefanos Tsitsipas, a philosophical 24-year-old from Athens with Björn Borg hair who routinely dives for otherwise untouchable drop shots and volleys.

“You can’t just run around there and push it back,” said Ruud, who plays like a one-man highlight reel, bending physics with angled forehands that are often hard to fathom. “There are 20 to 30 guys [on tour] that can produce incredible winners at an incredible level.” Others have perfected between-the-legs and behind-the-back shots that rival the swaggiest NBA dunks, or brought back the surprise underhand serve – and even that tactical relic of the McEnroe years, the serve-and-volley. (If you thought aggressive net play was dead outside your local pickleball league, you haven’t watched these guys play.) According to Rune, who was born in 2003: “It’s like the old days.”

Heading into this year’s Australian Open, everyone would seem to be chasing Alcaraz, who’s been billed as the second coming of Nadal. But most guys see the race to the top as an open field. “I don’t see any of the new generation being as dominant,” said Matteo Berrettini, a 26-year-old hunk from Italy who roared into the 2021 Wimbledon final with his booming forehand and crushing serve. One factor might be how hungry these guys are for hardware, and how fiercely they’re training for it. In the Big Three era, high rankings were a coveted consolation prize for most players. “At first, I was that kid, like, I want to be number one in the world,” Tiafoe told me. “Now, I just want to win a slam.”

And with Federer having proved you can play into your 40s, some are making extra room in their trophy cases. “I feel the next generation will play as long as those guys are, if not longer,” said Félix Auger-Aliassime, a polished 22-year-old from Canada who trains in Monaco and has a taste for high fashion. The night before, he’d won the Swiss Indoors, his third tournament victory in as many weeks.

Aware that a historic opportunity has finally arrived, Auger-Aliassime is pacing himself. “I’m in it for the long game, staying calm, and not getting too excited when things are happening right now,” he said. “I’m like, Okay, this is great, but I’m 22 and I’m going for a long career. This is just the beginning.” ❖

Taylor Fritz

(Opposite page) ➤

Nation: **USA**
Age: **25**

The SoCal native delivered one of American men’s tennis’s most heroic moments of the century at last year’s Indian Wells tournament (the most prestigious non-slam on the calendar), when he defied his coaches’ wishes and played on an injured ankle in the final against Rafael Nadal, beating him in a straight-set stunner.

“That was probably one of the best, if not the best, moment in my life,” said Fritz, whose mum was also a top-10 player. Now, along with Tiafoe, Fritz is his country’s best hope for its first men’s victory at a major since Andy Roddick in 2003. “I want to be the American to end the grand slam drought,” he said. “I want to be the first one to do it. And I do feel like it’s more reachable now than it’s ever been.”

Casper Ruud

(Following pages, left) ➤➤

Nation: **Norway**
Age: **24**

A second-generation pro who made two grand slam final appearances in 2022, Ruud is still adjusting to life as one of his generation’s most elite players. It’s a new status that’s led to novel experiences, like attending New York Fashion Week – “I had no idea how long a fashion show would be!” – and realising that, more often than not, he’s the guy on court to beat. “It’s always going to be tough, I think, to consider yourself a top player,” the Norwegian said. “For the moment I’m still new, I’m still fresh to everything, and I have a lot to prove still. But when people are playing me, I hope that they maybe are a little bit afraid of the results that I have had in the last few years.”

Holger Rune

(Following pages, right) ➤➤

Nation: **Denmark**
Age: **19**

Rune may still be a teenager, but he’s already one of the fiercest competitors on tour. Days after this photo shoot, he took down Novak Djokovic in a come-from-behind blitz in the finals of the Paris Masters to win his biggest tournament yet, running through fellow teen sensation Carlos Alcaraz along the way. What separates Rune and other youngsters like Alcaraz and Jannik Sinner from the rest of the next-gen pack? “Mindset,” Rune said. “The will to get better every day. And on court, even if you play badly, you dig deep, you find solutions, and you do everything you can to win.”

→
ON TAYLOR FRITZ
jacket, vintage
tank top (price
upon request)
Bottega Veneta
trousers £584
Lanvin
trainers £165
Nike x Sacai
watch, his own



ON CASPER RUUD
jacket, vintage
shirt £500
Gucci
shorts £179
**Polo Ralph
Lauren**
stylist's own
boxers and socks
Uniqlo
trainers £360
Acne Studios





ON HOLGER RUNE
coat £1,450
Husbands Paris
jacket (worn
underneath)
and hat, vintage
jumper £349
**Polo Ralph
Lauren**
jeans £320
Our Legacy
boots £870
Dior Men

NOW STREAM!



From left:
Brooks Koepka,
Tony Finau,
Rory McIlroy,
Justin Thomas,
Jordan Spieth,
Matt Fitzpatrick.

GOLF'S EXIST

NG ON NETFLIX:



When it greenlit its new golf series, Netflix was hoping to build something like the next *Drive to Survive* – then, a controversial new Saudi league took aim at the PGA Tour and the fight for the soul of the game commenced. It's a good thing cameras were rolling.

BY SAM SCHUBE
PHOTO ILLUSTRATION
BY JUSTIN METZ

ENTIAL CRISIS

IN LATE 2021, the television producers Paul Martin and Chad Mumm travelled to a tournament in the Bahamas to chat with former world number one golfer Brooks Koepka. Martin, along with James Gay-Rees, runs the production company Box to Box Films, a major player in the suddenly bustling business of sports documentaries and the company behind the Netflix series *Drive to Survive* – the megahit set in the world of Formula 1 racing that attracted a new generation of F1 fans. On their way to meet with Koepka, the producers held in their minds an ambitious new challenge: finding Formula 1-style excitement in the relaxed-fit world of professional golf.

For filmmakers looking for drama, Koepka might have seemed like the right place to start, if also a rather challenging subject. After a furious stretch in which he racked up four majors in a little over two years, Koepka's career had ground to a brutal halt: injury had reduced him to being only intermittently competitive. He didn't much enjoy talking about it.

Indeed, in the Bahamas, he was initially reluctant to wade into his frustrations. But then, as the conversation was winding down, Martin said, Koepka opened up. "He started to talk about this vulnerability – where he really was, and how he was waking up in the middle of the night," Martin told me. The producers felt like they had glimpsed a side of Koepka that audiences had never seen. Here, they had something they could work with: an aspect of the steely Koepka that his day job forced him to keep hidden.

This month, Koepka's private struggles, along with a surprising peek into the lives of some dozen other golfers, will begin streaming on Netflix, on a show called *Full Swing*. The series is meant to appeal to both dedicated golf fans (eager for new details about their favourite players) and to golf sceptics (who, a few years ago, probably didn't know anything about Formula 1, either). When I met the show's producers as they were finishing their edits on the series, the footage they screened for me had its share of conventional sports-doc action – big shots, big money, big personalities – but there was also plenty of the compelling and relatable human drama that makes for great TV.

Like, say, Brooks Koepka, hoodied up and dyed blond at home in his Death Star Florida mansion, not looking much like the world-beating titan that golf fans have known him to be. He seemed, in fact, miserable – unable in one scene to talk to his fiancée about their wedding plans without glazing over and obsessing about his broken swing. In another moment, he glumly rolled practice putts across a hotel carpet while debating his future. "We see Brooks really struggling to come to terms with the fact that he's, frankly, not playing as well as he was two, three years ago, and doesn't quite know how to get a grip on stuff," Martin told me.

For the producers, the drama of Koepka trying to hold it together happened to play out against an even more unexpected convulsion in the sport: the emergence of LIV Golf, an insurgent new rival to the PGA Tour. The breakaway league is bankrolled by Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund, which was

prepared to spend billions of dollars in the hopes of establishing an alternative to golf's governing body – and boosting Saudi Arabia's standing in world affairs. LIV began siphoning players – including real-deal major winners like Phil Mickelson and Dustin Johnson – away from the PGA Tour, via enormous paydays that included guaranteed contracts, reportedly worth hundreds of millions of dollars.

Overnight, the sport was cleaved in two. LIV intended to modernise golf – shorter tournaments, drastically larger purses, music blaring from the tee box. But those changes were overshadowed by its Saudi backing. Pro golf was suddenly the subject of headlines – strange, amusing, occasionally disturbing: Mickelson, for instance, described his new Saudi benefactors to the golf writer Alan Shipnuck as "scary motherfuckers."

Each week, a few big Tour players announced that they'd signed on with the competition. As outlandish as LIV could seem, though, the stakes were real: the rival league's unfathomable pool of money (and the class of talent it bought) threatened to upset the PGA Tour's monopoly on professional golf. The two leagues, as Shipnuck put it to me, were engaged in "the battle for the soul of golf."

On the ground, that fight created some complications for the show's producers. "We would turn up at events and stories that we thought we'd be telling would disappear, because this player's gone," Martin told me. One of those players was Brooks Koepka, who announced in June that he was signing up with LIV. Along with lots of other golf fans, I assumed that Koepka had made a cynical calculation driven by money. And while it's of course possible that he did exactly that (Koepka declined to speak to me for this story), the documentary footage I saw at the very least complicated that narrative. I didn't see an apex predator on the hunt for trophies or a has-been looking for one last payday. I saw a man confronting sporting mortality. It was easier, somehow, to understand his decision to abandon the grind of PGA Tour golf.

The show had come to the world of golf looking to tell a story about the human side of the game. What it got was a sport in the throes of an existential crisis. The show may well do for golf what *Drive to Survive* did for Formula 1, minting a new generation of fans, turning anonymous stars into global brands, and elevating the sport's profile. But it might also serve as something arguably even more interesting: a real-time recording of a sport blowing up.



Pro golfers Justin Thomas, left, and Jordan Spieth aboard a chartered jet, journeying in search of more golf in a scene from the new Netflix docuseries *Full Swing*.

LATE LAST AUGUST, as the PGA Tour was winding down its season at the Tour Championship in suburban Atlanta, I found the *Full Swing* crew on the second floor of the plummy clubhouse at East Lake Golf Club. There, the filmmakers had fashioned the women's locker room into their makeshift production office for the week. This represented something of an upgrade. "We're usually in a trailer," one crew member told me.

The task before the producers of *Full Swing* in this debut season was to carve eight discrete episodes out of golf's nearly year-long schedule, using footage captured at a quarter of the season's tournaments and featuring at least a dozen separate characters. "These are difficult shows to make," Martin told me last autumn. "They're really complex. There's a lot of logistics, and the edits are heavy, heavy lifts."

Each week, three or four teams of three or four people would fly to a tournament and scramble around the course in search of one or



more of their cast members. Sometimes they'd film with a golfer in his rental house or car; other times, they'd simply cruise around in a golf cart looking for something – anything – happening. One drizzly afternoon in Atlanta, an enterprising camerawoman spent 15 minutes talking her way into the trailer occupied by the rules officials, just so a camera could be there if a rain delay was called (which it wasn't).

The person most responsible for the show's look and feel – for the way it will hopefully communicate its insidery sensibility – is Chad Mumm, one of the show's executive producers and perhaps the biggest golf fan involved in the production. Mumm runs Vox Media Studios, a production company attached to the digital media brand of the same name. Mumm had a clear idea of what the show needed to be – or, at least, on the trappings it needed to avoid. "It has to feel not like the golf you see on TV," Mumm told me. He cited *Drive to Survive's* heightened vérité style as one influence – but

also the director Paul Greengrass's shaky action films. All told, a little more *Friday Night Lights* than *Rudy*.

The pacing, editing and tone, meanwhile, were geared toward capturing a feeling that even the casual weekend golfer knows well. "There is a level of pressure that these guys put on themselves, and in the biggest moments it is crushing as a viewer to even experience it, and live through it, and imagine yourself in that person's shoes," Mumm said.

Perhaps surprisingly, though, much of the show wouldn't focus on golf itself – which is, after all, already available on television every weekend. Producers estimated that actual tournament golf would comprise about a third of the show. The bulk of the action would be composed of the in-between moments. Aimless tee-box chatter doesn't make the cut on Sunday-afternoon broadcasts, but it's unmatched when it comes to establishing the rhythms of life for a pro golfer. Mumm told me that the producers

would often ask the golfers to simply share the ordinary, off-the-course goings-on of their days. The golfers were fine with this. "It's not like it was anything intrusive," Tour pro Max Homa told me. "It just was, we'd be eating, and you could see a camera kind of pointing at you as you ate and talked and whatnot." Martin explained that the goal here was simple: to humanise these exceptional athletes. "These shows really are about normalising these worlds and making them relatable," he said. "Making people understand that, whether you are Joe Schmo at home or you are Brooks Koepka, when you're going through a tough time, you have the same reaction and the same experiences."

The goal was to offset those humanising humdrum moments with ones unique to the world of professional golf. One clip that Mumm showed me – sure to light up golf Twitter when it airs – captures the stars Justin Thomas and Jordan Spieth on a private jet. They pass the time by playing a card game:



guessing the card drawn from a deck. As if to underscore both the competitive intensity inherent to pro golfers, along with the spoils derived from enduring such intensity, they are shown betting a thousand dollars on each draw.

IT WAS NOT always obvious that golf demanded a glossy, documentary-style treatment. Mumm had long watched *Hard Knocks*, the HBO series that embeds in an NFL training camp each year, and he thought that a similar warts-and-all project could work in his favourite sport. But initially, he had a tough time making the case.

He'd begun working up a plan for the show in 2019, and, with a contact at the PGA Tour, spent a year enlisting talent before pitching the series around Hollywood. Nobody bit. Gabe Spitzer, an executive on Netflix's documentaries team, told me that his early reservations were largely about the show's then limited scope: the sport's majors – its four most famous events, governed separately – were not involved. “We said, ‘Look,

we're intrigued,’” Spitzer said, “‘but see if you can get the majors on board, and come back to us if you do.’”

So Mumm set about enlisting the majors: the Masters, the Open Championship, the US Open, and the PGA Championship. What he soon discovered surprised him. Golf's insularity had for a long time worked in its favour: blue-chip advertisers cared about the wealth of the sport's audience, not its size. But in a world of social media and streaming television, the sport had fallen behind – and the people in charge knew it. For all the pomp and tradition of the Masters, Mumm explained, the tight-lipped folks who put on that tournament are “getting more progressive about how they tell the story. They know that the tournament can't just be for old people; they need younger audiences.” (Amusingly, Mumm told me, he's heard that the Netflix engineering team considers the Masters streaming app the best on the market – after Netflix's own.)

At the same time, the stuffy world of pro golf was beginning to loosen up, and the prospect of appearing on a television show held new appeal to the players. Journeyman pros like Joel Dahmen and Max Homa were building fanbases by acting less like birdie machines and more like human beings. “As I've progressed in my years out here on the PGA Tour, I've grown up a lot, but I also decided I play my best golf when I'm really enjoying it, and I'm having a good time, and I'm being myself,” Dahmen told me. “It wasn't, like, a set plan of ‘I'm going to tweet more’, or ‘I'm going to do more fun things’. It was just like, well, if I continue to play good golf, and I'm having fun doing it, it's okay to show the world that.”

When it comes to professional golf, “tweeting more” counts as a somewhat revolutionary act. As Chris Wandell, the PGA Tour executive who worked with Mumm on the pitch, explained that in this universe, an all-access documentary was new. “The first time this idea was put in front of our management team,” he told me, “they were like, ‘Wait a second, what if they swear?’” (Neither the PGA Tour nor the cast members have approval over what appears in the show.)

That Dahmen, with one Tour victory to his name, is among the sport's most prominent social media successes is a reminder that the ceiling on stardom in golf, where players are independent contractors and must market themselves, is rather low compared to other professional leagues. Justin Thomas, a two-time major winner, explained the dynamic succinctly when I caught him at East Lake: “Even if you're a top player, unless you're, like, Tiger, no one truly knows who you are.”

These big, swirling questions – about fame, money and image making – were cast into starker relief by the arrival of LIV. With their cameras following defectors like Koepka, Dustin Johnson and Ian Poulter, the producers felt they were able to capture the emotional depth of the conflict in a way that surprised Mumm. “The existential crisis for the game is real,” he said. Golfers spent all year whispering about which of their peers were taking the LIV money. “It's more personal than maybe you would think.”

Unquestionably, the game's crisis was a god-send for producers looking for drama, Martin explained. “Listen, if I was being cynical,

“IT GAVE REAL STAKES AND REAL DILEMMA TO SOME OF THE CHARACTERS,” PAUL MARTIN SAID OF THE BATTLE BETWEEN THE PGA AND LIV GOLF. “IT’S BEEN KIND OF STORY DYNAMITE FOR US.”

OPENING PAGES: BROOKS KOEPKA, WARREN LITTLE; TONY FINAU, STACY REVERE; RORY MCILROY, STUART FRANKLIN; JUSTIN THOMAS, CHRISTIAN PETERSEN; JORDAN SPEITH, MICHAEL REAVES; MATT FITZPATRICK; SAM GREENWOOD. ALL: GETTY IMAGES. THIS PAGE: COURTESY OF NETFLIX.



Opposite page: Jordan Spieth and Justin Thomas practice together a week before the 2022 PGA Championship in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

This page: Matt Fitzpatrick driving after a competitive day at the 2022 PGA Championship.

I would say it was a dream for the series, because it gave real stakes and real dilemma to some of these characters,” he said. “It’s been kind of story dynamite for us.”

A WEEK AFTER the tournament in Atlanta, Martin and James Gay-Rees ambled into the *Full Swing* office in New York and soon fell into conversation about the show’s Rory McIlroy storyline. McIlroy, who is perhaps the game’s foremost non-Tiger star, spent last season using that stature to trash LIV at every opportunity.

The team had been whittling their mountain of footage, and a pair of producers were specially focused on refining the show’s presentation of McIlroy. Noting the golfer’s Northern Irish heritage, one of them wondered aloud whether they might work the Troubles into the show’s narrative. “Coming from a world in which choices have consequences and lines are sort of being drawn in the sand,” he put it, perhaps McIlroy’s biography could be linked to his fierce advocacy for the Tour.

Gay-Rees was deferential. “If you want to have a crack at it and if you think it can be laid in subtly and tastefully, and it feels like it’s legitimate, organic – fine. If it feels tricky, then don’t worry about it.” Martin was blunter: “I mean, the subtext of PGA versus LIV is IRA versus...” The table laughed. “It’s a stretch.”

Exactly what the battle between the PGA and LIV *is* comparable to remains tough to tell. As the show neared its air date, the two sides were still trading lawsuits sure to require years of deliberation. Whether LIV players would be able to compete in majors remained an open question – one to be taken

up, perhaps, on a second season of *Full Swing*. (Mumm is also excited about the idea of diving into a schism of a different kind: this year’s Ryder Cup, which pits a team of Americans against one of Europeans.)

In New York, season one was locking into place. On the day I visited the offices, Mumm shared that Netflix suits who had previewed it requested that the show not open – as was then the plan – with a forlorn Brooks Koepka, who seemed simply too sad to kick off the series.

But moments of happy surprise abounded. Mumm showed me a portion of the golfer Matt Fitzpatrick’s storyline, which represented one of the lucky accidents that any show needs if it wants to stand out in the streaming glut.

Fitzpatrick is a British golfer whose nerdy vibe does not suggest alpha competitor. But then, in June, Fitzpatrick won the US Open in a way that not even Mumm, Martin, and Gay-Rees would have dreamed of scripting. Holding a one-shot lead heading into the final hole at the Country Club in Brookline, Massachusetts, one of the most storied sites in US Open history, he sailed his tee shot into a fairway bunker. And then, he daringly took aim at the hole and striped a nine iron out of the sand and onto the green. He putted twice and took the trophy.

I watched it all play out in the editing room in agonising slow motion. Fitzpatrick’s miss off the tee. His family watching from behind the ropes, chattering nervously. His walk to the green soundtracked, triumphant, by a bleating Bon Iver song. I’d seen the shot live on TV months earlier and in countless replays. I knew exactly what was going to happen. It still ruled. “Everyone’s like, ‘We know how it ends,’”

Mumm told me in the room. “I’ve watched that 50 times and it still gets me every time.”

That the footage seemed yanked from a sports movie was sort of the point. “People always try to tell the sports version of these stories, and we are always like, no, no, no,” Paul Martin told me. “Obviously, you have to be faithful to the sport, but you’re telling the movie version of these stories. It’s not enough that Matthew Fitzpatrick turned up and won the US Open. It’s really: how do we establish Matthew as a character so that in our show, when he gets to that 18th hole, when he hits it in the bunker, and then he hits that shot onto the green, our audience...” He trailed off. “It needs to feel like *Rocky*.”

Of course, getting the footage to build the full Fitzpatrick story meant training cameras on him long before his moment of glory. The crew began following Fitzpatrick in March, at the Players Championship in Florida. “To have Netflix there was kind of weird, because you just don’t want any distractions or anything,” he told me. “But it was almost good to have the distractions of thinking about that, rather than thinking about the golf the next day.”

And so, when they asked to embed with him again before the US Open, he was game. Even if he was still a long shot. So much so that cameras captured the moment when a tournament security guard asked if he was a player or a caddy. When we spoke, he was wry and understated about the whole thing. “I would assume,” Fitzpatrick told me of his time being filmed, “they got a lot of good content.” ❧

SAM SCHUBE *is the director of GQ SPORTS.*

Travis Barker's career has always veered towards the unpredictable – but even he never could have predicted his surreal new reality.





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HURSDAY NIGHT, a corner booth at Crossroads Kitchen, a vegan restaurant in West Hollywood, just before the dinner rush. Travis Barker shivers in a threadbare Subhumans T-shirt. He could conceivably ask the staff to turn down the AC a little – he’s an investor in this place, as it happens, not to mention, y’know, a rock star – but he doesn’t. “I think I’m, like, permanently cold, because I just spent the last four hours in my underwear,” he says. Then he laughs. Even in the context of Barker’s ever-more-improbable life, this day has been a weird one. He spent the afternoon standing around mostly naked while being measured, photographed, and scanned by representatives from Madame Tussauds, where he’s being honoured with a wax figure in his likeness. When it’s suggested that he might be the first person from an American punk band to be thus enshrined – the museum has a Johnny Rotten but not, for example, a Joey Ramone – Barker says, “Very cool,” then asks if they’ve made one for Lemmy from Motörhead. (Answer: no.)

Strange day. Strange week. On Tuesday, Barker was at the Kia Forum, playing “Bad Reputation” and “Cherry Bomb” with the Foo Fighters and guest vocalist Joan Jett at a tribute to the late Foos drummer Taylor Hawkins, who died suddenly in March. The gig was an honour in more ways than one. Hawkins and Barker had been friends since the ’90s, when Barker was working for the city of Laguna Beach, California, as a garbageman, living on his roommate’s couch, and playing drums at dive-bar gigs a few nights a week. Hawkins, who lived in Laguna and would soon join Alanis Morissette’s band (he’d meet Dave Grohl while touring with her), was a regular at those shows – and even back then, he could tell Barker had the goods. “He would come up to me and be like, ‘Kid, I swear to God, I come every week just to watch you play. You’re a fucking star.’ And I’m like, ‘No I’m not.’ He would come every week we played.”

Barker remembers his apprenticeship in Laguna’s dive bars as one of the happiest periods of his life – second only, he says, to the births of his children, and right now. He had a place to live and enough money to pay for food and drumsticks; he went skateboarding and played music every day. Back then he would have felt guilty, he says, imagining anything more – like, say, joining an epoch-defining band that would go on to sell tens of millions of albums, for example, or producing and collaborating with scores of big-name artists from across the genre spectrum, or running his own record label, or marrying joyfully into what

happens to be one of the most famous families on the planet, or putting his clout behind a clothing label, restaurants, or an organic vegan CBD-gummy-and-tincture line. And yet all of this and more has come to pass. One day you’re a drummer-slash-trash-collector and the next you’re drinking wine with Iggy Pop, and when things like this happen to him, Barker sometimes wonders if he’s dreaming, but that’s the point – his dreams were never like this.

Which is not to say it’s been easy. In 2008, Barker was horribly burned in a private-jet crash that claimed the lives of his longtime assistant Chris Baker and his security guard Che Still, both close friends. Barker spent three months in hospital, endured 26 surgeries, endless skin grafts, and a period of suicidal depression; he later told interviewers he’d offered friends a million dollars if they’d help him end his life. The only other survivor of the crash was Barker’s best friend and musical collaborator, Adam “DJ AM” Goldstein; about a year after the accident, Goldstein died of a drug overdose in New York. Barker struggled with survivor’s guilt and PTSD. At times, he says, “I didn’t know if I’d ever play music again. I didn’t know if I ever wanted to *go outside* again.”

Barker has never cared for the truism that everything happens for a reason – “I’ll never think that about the people I lost,” he says – but he acknowledges that the crash saved him from a more tragic and common rock’n’roll ending. As documented in his 2015 memoir, *Can I Say: Living Large, Cheating Death, and Drums, Drums, Drums*, the Barker who got on that plane was a textbook train wreck, drowning his consciousness in weed and pills and Coupe de Villes as his marriage (to former Miss USA Shanna Moakler) fell apart. “I was going down a really fast-paced, dangerous path,” he says. Surviving the crash gave him a second chance he’s determined to live up to.

“There’s not a day goes by that I don’t make the most of it,” he says. “That I don’t appreciate it, and that I’m not grateful for it.”

TWO WEEKS AFTER Barker’s date with waxwork history, Blink-182 will announce a new album and a world tour – both of which will feature Blink co-founder and guitarist Tom DeLonge, who hasn’t played with the band since 2015.

When we talk about Blink in late September, Barker doesn’t tell me this is happening. At that point DeLonge’s return to the fold is still a secret. But the external pop-cultural reasons why a classic-Blink reunion tour makes sense right now are anything but. When Blink were at their commercial peak in the early 2000s, critics wrote

them off as juvenile and derivative – a cut-price Descendents, a boy band for kids who wore fake lip rings to school-picture day. But legacy is hard to predict in real time. In the 20-plus years since Blink streaked through the streets of LA and into the hearts of impressionable *Total Request Live* voters in the video for “What’s My Age Again?”, they’ve become maybe the most broadly influential rock band of their era.

“They crossed over on such a large scale, and I think that was important for punk rock culture,” says Avril Lavigne, whose 2022 comeback album, *Love Sux*, coproduced by Barker, is her first release on Barker’s label, DTA Records. “They made it more mainstream, but that’s also what got the CD into my hands, and how more people could discover that type of music.”

Blink split up for the first time after releasing their self-titled fifth album in 2003, but their success had carved out space for bands like Paramore, Fall Out Boy and My Chemical Romance to cross the streams of pop and punk in front of mainstream audiences as the 2000s gave way to the 2010s. More recently – and more surprisingly, and maybe more importantly – they’ve become a touchstone for TikTok bedroom-pop producers and Gen-Z SoundCloud rappers who learned to play power chords during quarantine.

The future of punk, and maybe pop music in general, is genre-agnostic, heavily medicated, and extremely online, born out of fast-im-

ploding distinctions – between influencer and rock star, hip-hop and guitar rock, white music and Black music, therapeutic sincerity and ironic trauma bragging. While Blink’s early-2000s detractors wouldn’t and probably couldn’t have thunk it, a generation of young musicians who’ve never known a world without forever war, financial crisis, environmental calamity and social media have reached back to the sounds of the past for an emotional vocabulary by which to vent their pain – and what they’ve pulled off the shelf is *Take Off Your Pants and Jacket*, not *Kid A*.

Part of the reason all those unclassifiable post-everything internet-bred emo artists sound so much like Blink is that they’ve probably got Barker himself behind the boards – and, often, the drums. Blink-182 proved that punk could go pop; what Barker’s doing now is helping artists born in the genreless reaches of the internet go *punk*, in *order* to go pop. In 2019, Barker co-produced and played on the single “I Think I’m OKAY” with Machine Gun Kelly, a white battle rapper from Cleveland, Ohio, who was then best known for beefing with Eminem and who had never released a rock

←
OPENING PAGES, LEFT
coat £1,920
Amiri
trousers (price upon request)
Givenchy
sunglasses and nose ring (throughout), his own
necklace, his own
Junya Watanabe
←
OPENING PAGES, RIGHT
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Dolce & Gabbana
trousers £1,450
Marni
necklace, his own
Junya Watanabe
→
waistcoat £1,200
trousers £740
Giorgio Armani
watch £15,900
Chopard
necklaces £2,600 each
Tiffany & Co.



song before. Barker thinks this is why it was a hit on the radio: “A rock band would probably be ignored if they did that song,” he says. “But it was different, because it was Kells kind of coming like you’d never heard him before.”

Afterward, Barker remembers, “Kells was like, ‘I can’t help but think – did we just get lucky with that one song, or can we make *more* fucking songs like that?’”

The result was *Tickets to My Downfall*, which was both Kelly’s first full-blown pop-punk album – “I said, ‘We’re not gonna rap on this album,’” Barker recalls – and his first platinum record. “And when that did well,” Barker says, “doors were kicked down, and after that you saw the resurgence of that genre doing really well.”

A cynic would call this music cynical, and you could certainly accuse Barker of aiding and abetting shameless/clueless opportunists looking to suck up to modern-rock radio programmers by draping themselves in borrowed rock clichés. On the other hand, anyone still policing who is and isn’t entitled to dress and sing punk (or self-identify as emo) is guarding a gate that’s been broken since the day Malcolm McLaren first pimped out the Sex Pistols. Kelly might be fronting, but – if you look at it from a galaxy-brain-enough level – so is every punk-identified person who wasn’t there the first time the Ramones played CBGB.

“Everyone thinks that someone else is a poseur, but pretty much everyone on earth is a poseur,” reasons music journalist Josiah Hughes, the cohost of the admirably exhaustive Blink-182 podcast *155*. As understood and practised by artists like Kelly, *punk* or *emo* might be an abstract pseudo-genre – born of nostalgia, commercial expediency, and the same streaming-age historical context collapse that fuels alt-throwback DJ parties like LA’s long-running Emo Nite, where the definition of *emo* includes everything from post-hardcore to Linkin Park to Post Malone. However, the imprimatur of an artist like Barker connects it to something resembling a tradition.

“I think that’s why people turn to Travis,” Hughes says. “It’s a vibe. It’s a feeling – this melding and crunching together of different punk-related subgenres. He’s like the king of *punk-adjacent*.”

BARKER SITS IN the booth at Crossroads for just under two hours, consuming only one small coffee. His phone sits face-up on the banquette beside him the entire time, lighting up more or less continuously with text messages and alerts. The one time it actually rings, he answers.

“Hey, baby,” he says. “Hey. I’m gonna call you. I’m gonna call you – yeah. As soon as my interview’s done. I love you. *Mwah*.”

He hangs up and doesn’t explain who was calling; he doesn’t have to, and presumably I don’t have to tell you either.

Barker met his first Kardashian in the early 2000s, when he briefly dated Paris Hilton. Kourtney’s sister Kim – perhaps you’ve heard of her – was Paris’s assistant. Travis and

—
“I think that’s why people turn to Travis... he’s like the king of *punk-adjacent*.”

— JOSIAH HUGHES, MUSIC JOURNALIST AND PODCAST HOST





shirt £970

Tom Ford

trousers £425

Martine Rose

necklace, his own

Junya Watanabe

Kourtney were platonic friends for years; in a 2017 Christmas episode of *Keeping Up With the Kardashians*, he and his children drop by to visit their neighbours in Calabasas and Travis frosts an anarchy symbol onto the side of a gingerbread house.

The first rumours of them being more than friends made the rounds when they were seen leaving Crossroads Kitchen together in 2018; they went public as a couple last year, and – after a few months of intense and thoroughly documented PDA – got engaged in October 2021.

The proposal itself was filmed for the Kardashians’ new Hulu show, at what Barker says was Kris Jenner’s request. Barker says he agreed on one condition: “I can’t see one camera, and Kourtney cannot see one camera.” (Barker popped the question on a beach in Santa Barbara in a heart-shaped rose garden that had been placed there for the occasion; the footage that aired on the show was captured via GoPros hidden in the foliage.)

A few months later, House Barker and House Kardashian gathered at Stefano Gabbana and Domenico Dolce’s villa in Portofino, Italy, for a gala wedding ceremony that was technically private, although anyone interested could follow the action on social media, where the Kardashians act as their own panopticon. (Barker and Kardashian had already tied the knot by then, a few weeks earlier at a courthouse in Santa Monica, in front of Travis’s father and Kourtney’s grandmother, who are both too old to fly.)

It’s worth noting that Barker has been a reality-TV husband once before – on MTV’s *Meet the Barkers*, which attempted to turn Barker and his then wife Moakler into a punk rock version of Jessica Simpson and Nick Lachey (who didn’t stay married either). It ran for two seasons, and according to Barker, the level of disclosure it demanded makes his current part-time reality-TV gig feel like a walk in the park.

“There were cameras placed throughout my house. There were people *living in my house*,” he says. “It was insane, y’know. And it wasn’t really for me, at that level – it was too much.”

These days, he says, “the only time I really film with Kourt is when she asks me to, and I’m only around for some of it. She’ll be like, ‘Hey, by the way, we’re filming today,’ and I’m like, ‘Okay, cool’ – it doesn’t change how I act or what I dress like, you know what I mean?”

There’s a scene in a recent episode where Travis accompanies Kourtney to the doctor for an egg-retrieval procedure. When Travis is called upon to provide a semen sample, Kourtney asks the doctor how much, y’know, assistance she’s allowed to offer.

When this interviewer suggests that some people might not feel comfortable sharing events this intimate with every Hulu subscriber on earth, Barker cheerfully replies, “I don’t give a fuck.”

“I don’t care if I’m cumming in a cup, or whatever,” he says. “It’s real life. And if any of that can help people – seeing Kourtney’s journey through IVF, which is super hard for a woman. You saw her struggle with it and talk about it. That’s real. And there’s however many millions of dudes that have to go and give their semen for this same procedure. So it’s, like, relatable, you know? I’ve never been fazed by any of that.”

TRAVIS BARKER DOES not know what happens after we die. He hopes it’s something cool – like, a situation where you still get to hang around with your living loved ones, invisibly, while simultaneously somehow being reunited in heaven with those who’ve predeceased you. “I think you could be present, but not be hurt,” Barker says. This, he thinks, would be a cool way to exist.

He believes this is possible, because he still feels the presence of all the people he’s lost. His mother, who died when he was 13. Chris and Che, who died on that plane. DJ AM. He knows they’re in some beautiful place, but also here with him. He knows Taylor Hawkins was watching him at that tribute show, so he tried to play harder and louder and wilder than everyone else, because he wanted Hawkins to see him and say, *He honoured me correctly. He went hard.*

Barker went to Catholic school for a few years. His parents were “never, like, super strict” about religion, but they went to church on Sundays.

These days, he and Kourtney go to church together sometimes. People rarely count the Kardashians among the world’s highest-profile Christian entertainers, which is strange – not just because of the family’s connection to equally high-profile Christian Kanye West, but because they’ve made their faith as public as any other aspect of their lives; the words “Lover of Christ” come after “Momager” in Kris Jenner’s Twitter bio. Maybe this isn’t a surprising thing to learn about a guy who’s had a pair of praying hands inked on the side of his head since he was 19, but Barker says he’s “really close with a couple pastors,” and adds, “Yeah, I’m like, Christian now,” as if this is something he’s just realising, talking about it. He and Kourtney pray every night, sometimes first thing in the morning, and before every flight.

This is a new thing too. Barker has spent years managing the trauma of the crash using every tool at his disposal – therapy, running, boxing, breath work, CBD, and probably more than a little bit of benign workaholism, plus new tattoos of his parents and children to cover the burn scars on his back – but before last year, he hadn’t set foot on a plane since 2008. For years just *seeing* a plane would freak him out; the smell of jet fuel reminded him of his time

in the burns unit. When he had tour dates overseas, he took a boat; when Blink played Australia in 2013, they took the drummer from Bad Religion.

At that point, he was divorced from Moakler and he had survived the crash, and to get past all of it, he says, he told himself a story about what he didn’t need: “Like, I’m good being single, I don’t wanna love anyone, I’m gonna spend every day at the studio.” He told himself he wouldn’t fall in love and he’d never fly again, which was a way of telling himself he’d never get over what had happened, and gradually – he sees this now – his life got small, stuck, fixed.

And then he fell in love with Kourtney, and he would sit and listen to her talk about everywhere she’d been and everywhere she was about to go, all of it made possible by planes and planes and planes. “She’s been everywhere beautiful in the world,” Barker says, “that I’ve never even heard of.” Finally, Barker says, “I was like, ‘If you ever want me to fly with you, just tell me eight to 10 hours before.’”

And one night, she told him. Barker told her she could probably go home instead of sleeping at his, which wasn’t what they normally did.

“Because I was trying to get out of it,” he says. But Kourtney said she wouldn’t leave. “She’s like, ‘I’m gonna spend the night with you. I’m staying the night with you and we’re gonna go to the airport.’ She just knew, and she stuck by me and toughed it out. And it was the best flight. And I wasn’t scared once.”

That flight was to Cabo San Lucas, Mexico. He flies all the time now. He can’t wait to go back to Australia. To Japan. And he can’t wait to travel just to travel, not to play a show. Anytime he’s gone anywhere outside the US, it’s almost always been a tour date. “I’m like, ‘I get to go and just, like, have fun?’ I didn’t know that existed.”

He’s learning how to be comfortable; it’s a process. At the Hawkins tribute show this week, “they had this lavish room we could hang out in,” he says. Barker asked if he could chill in the hallway between sets instead, practising drums on a stack of road cases until it was time for him to go on. The organisers, he remembers, “were like, ‘Yeah, whatever, Travis.’ I’m back there going, ‘I want to be uncomfortable!’”

He knows how silly it sounds: Travis Barker, indisputable rock star, budding music-business kingmaker, a famous man with an even-more-famous wife, politely asking if he can be bumped *down* to shittier accommodations. But that’s what it’s like to be him – at least right now.

“When everything’s perfect, it scares me,” he says. “I want some adversity during a show. I want it to rain and the show almost gets cancelled. I don’t want to be too comfortable. I mean, my drum technician used to clean my cymbals, and I’m like, ‘Daniel – I like the blood on my cymbals. It makes me feel good.’ He’s a perfectionist. I’m like, ‘Just leave a little bit of blood on the cymbals.’ It just makes it feel like home for me, you know?” ❧

ALEX PAPPADEMAS is a writer based in LA.

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PIXEL

**HOW HOLLYWOOD'S
RELIANCE ON VISUAL
EFFECTS HAS PUSHED
THE VFX INDUSTRY'S
BELEAGUERED ARTISTS
TO BREAKING POINT.**

BY SIMON PARKIN
PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY JUSTIN METZ

FUCKED



ON 7 OCTOBER 2019, YVES McCRAE, A 29-YEAR-OLD VISUAL EFFECTS ARTIST, RECEIVED AN EMAIL FROM A RECRUITER ASKING IF HE WOULD BE INTERESTED IN A JOB AT THE VANCOUVER BRANCH OF THE MOVING PICTURE COMPANY (MPC). SINCE ITS FOUNDING IN LONDON IN 1970, MPC HAS GROWN TO BECOME ONE OF THE MOST PRESTIGIOUS AND STORIED VISUAL EFFECTS HOUSES IN THE WORLD, WINNING THREE ACADEMY AWARDS FOR ITS CGI WORK ON THE FILMS *1917*, *THE JUNGLE BOOK*, AND *LIFE OF PI*. McCRAE EXPECTED A RIGOROUS RECRUITMENT PROCESS, INVOLVING MULTIPLE INTERVIEWS AND PROBING QUESTIONS ABOUT HIS SHOW REEL AND EXPERIENCE. THE RECRUITER EXPLAINED, HOWEVER, THERE WOULD BE NO INTERVIEW. IF HE WANTED THE JOB, McCRAE JUST NEEDED TO FORWARD A COPY OF HIS PASSPORT AND SHOW UP AT THE OFFICE THE FOLLOWING WEEK. “IS THIS LEGIT?” HE REPLIED.

SEVEN DAYS LATER, McCrae arrived at MPC's Vancouver studio, a red-brick building situated in the expensive, historic part of the city, less than a mile from the Art Institute of Vancouver, where he had studied visual effects (VFX) several years earlier. McCrae, who has a youthful face and auburn hair, half expected to have been the victim of a prank. Instead, he found the lobby crammed with dozens of other young VFX artists, some of whom he recognised from his work on other projects: *Godzilla*, *Black Panther*, *Stranger Things*. "The waiting room was literally packed," McCrae recalls. "There was nowhere to sit." While he waited, McCrae struck up a conversation with the artist he was squeezed up against. "Neither of us had ever seen anything like it before."

The group was then led into a screening room, a cinema-like auditorium with comfy chairs and insulated walls, where staff would watch the "dailies" – VFX-heavy shots that had been completed – throughout the day. One of the heads of the department walked in, McCrae recalled, and addressed the crowd. "We'll get right into it. We have two projects you're going to be working on: either *Cats* or *Sonic*." McCrae felt the energy in the room perceptibly shift. Both films were already notorious, and not just among VFX artists. A few months earlier, Paramount Pictures had released the first trailer for *Sonic the Hedgehog*, a live-action adaptation of the Sega video game. Unlike his streamlined design of the games, film-Sonic embodied an eccentric quasi-realism, featuring a chattering row of teeth, beady, fearful eyes, and a questing snout. On social media, the design was immediately pilloried. A journalist from *The Guardian* described Sonic's design as looking like "a cheap knock-off... toy your child might win at a fairground stand and then be terrified of." To fans this was, he added, like a "200mph slap in the face."

Cats, a live-action adaptation of Andrew Lloyd Webber's musical, had similarly been subjected to an online pile-on for the effects work seen in early trailers. Real actors played the cats – James Corden as Bustopher Jones, Judi Dench as Old Deuteronomy, Jason Derulo as Rum Tum Tugger – but their fur, among other things, was computer generated and digitally applied, a prodigiously challenging task. Mill Film won the contract to supply the film's special effects, a senior industry insider told me. The once-defunct movie arm of commercial studio The Mill, it had only relaunched in 2018. "*Cats* was one of their first jobs," he said. "They underbid and crewed up a junior-heavy studio to do thousands of shots that would be incredibly hard even for an established studio with a proven pipeline. That apparent hubris was ultimately paid for by the artists." (Mill Film's parent company, Technicolor, denied this account, and said its work on *Cats* had been "adequately staffed by experts in the field.")

The crunch on *Cats* seemed to encapsulate every problem in an increasingly beleaguered industry. Another VFX artist told *The Daily*

Beast that the workload made working on the film "almost slavery". Some artists reportedly were at the office for days, taking breaks to sleep under their desks. (Technicolor said it had investigated and "found no evidence" to support these claims.)

Sources who worked for Mill Film alleged that, like many contemporary filmmakers, *Cats* director Tom Hooper did not properly understand the VFX process, and failed to appreciate that early renders of characters were just that: incomplete sketches without the proper lighting, textures, or colours. (Representatives for Hooper did not respond to requests for comment). When Mill Film failed to deliver, its sister company, MPC, took on a major chunk of the project. (Technicolor said: "It is not uncommon for multiple studios to work on client projects.")

Two months before the release of *Cats*, and four months before *Sonic*, McCrae had been recruited as part of the clean-up squad. He was there, as one insider told me, to "shit-fix".

THE SEEDS OF the special effects industry's current crisis were sown decades ago. When *King Kong* premiered in 1933, audiences could not fathom how the filmmakers had captured a 24ft gorilla climbing New York's most famous spire, clutching a terrified woman in one paw. (The answer: mostly maquette models covered in rubber and rabbit fur.) That film broke records, and established the link between extravagant effects and extravagant profits. Ever since, Hollywood studios have competed to produce the most spectacular special effects, hoping to attract similarly sizeable audiences.

For decades, effects in films meant practical effects: puppets and pyrotechnics. Throughout the '70s and '80s, the introduction of CGI enabled directors to create scenes that previously would have been too dangerous, expensive, or impractical to render on screen in any other way. In time, VFX artists gained the facility to recreate, pixel by pixel, any fruit of the imagination. Steven Spielberg's *Jurassic Park* – a film

about a safari park filled with reanimated dinosaurs, which arguably marked the beginning of the industry's almost wholesale shift from practical effects to CGI – featured fewer than 60 shots of fully computer-generated dinosaurs. Today, even a relatively low-budget romantic comedy will feature five times as many CGI shots. "Other than maybe the lowest-budget indie project, there is no film made today that does not feature several hundred visual effects, at absolute minimum," a veteran VFX artist told me.

Where *King Kong*'s maquettes were hand-made over a prolonged period that required careful planning, the rise of digital technologies spread the idea that any prop could be changed on a whim with apparent ease. Now, not only were VFX houses responsible for conjuring vast fictional cities, bustling crowds of tens of thousands, and cascading waterfalls, but they would also spend months fixing mistakes: digitally erasing visible wig lines in period dramas, inserting absent props, snipping away errant strands of hair, tucking in double chins. In one scene in 2022's *Top Gun: Maverick* – a film which touted its use of so-called practical effects over VFX – artists digitally swapped a pair of white trousers worn by Jennifer Connelly's character with blue jeans. These divine powers to reshape the physical world became the VFX industry's essential weakness. Once artists could create anything, soon enough, they were asked to create everything.

Not all changes are so minor. On 2016's *Suicide Squad*, for example, studio executives were unhappy with a pivotal scene involving one of the film's stars, Dylan*, a former senior VFX artist on several major blockbusters who has left the industry due to burnout, told me. "So, a month prior to release, we replaced her entire body with a computer-generated double that the executives at the studio could direct. Nobody noticed." (Warner Bros. did not respond to requests for comment.)

On another film, Dylan says, a Marvel executive decided to change the location of a key

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scene after it had been shot. “So we had to cut the characters out of their original footage and put them in an entirely new environment,” he says. “I was called in on a Sunday because an executive didn’t like the position of a rock in a shot that didn’t end up even being visible when other effects were added. My team of four worked 12-hour days for a month to move clouds in the sky to the exact position they wanted.” (Marvel did not respond to requests for comment.)

The recent explosion of streaming services, combined with a fashion for VFX-heavy fantasy and superhero shows, has increased budgets – according to *The Wall Street Journal*, Netflix spent an average of £25 million on each episode of the fourth season of *Stranger Things*, which aired in May 2022. As much as half of the budget of a Marvel film will be spent on effects. But industry consolidation (almost all big releases are now made by just a handful of studios: Disney, Paramount, Sony, Universal, Netflix, Amazon, and Warner Bros.), and an absence of the coordinated unionisation that protects workers across almost all other aspects of film production has resulted in often toxic working conditions. “Companies underbid rivals to get the work, offering to do it at cost or even lower than cost just to win in more work,” Andrew*, a former lead artist from one of the major visual effects companies told me. “VFX houses are terrified of being blacklisted,” he said, “so will often compromise to maintain their commercial relationships with the clutch of studios that hold the power.”

When directors or studio heads demand last-minute alterations that fall outside of the scope of the original contract, companies can theoretically place a change order. “But if you piss off one of them, and they take their business away that is a whole chunk of potential work from that studio that disappears,” Andrew added. “So often you’ll just take the hit.”

The artists, inevitably, shoulder the burden, working destructively long hours, damaging their physical and mental health, and tumbling

into burnout. “It was not uncommon to walk into bathrooms to find people crying, and I’ve had to console people falling apart at two in the morning at their desks,” Dylan told me.

Another source told me that, during a particularly intense period, managers at one VFX studio once blocked the office doors to prevent staff from leaving at the end of the day. Fearing for their jobs, frustrated VFX workers have taken to social media forums such as the VFX subreddit to share horror stories. “I’ve been worked to the point where I felt like I was going to die,” one person wrote in a Reddit thread filled with complaints from disgruntled VFX artists. Another described working in the industry as “like psychological torture.”

In April 2020, Malcolm Angell, a senior VFX artist at Mill Film Montreal, died by suicide. Angell’s family has in part blamed his workload; according to emails obtained by *The Canadian Press*, Angell had complained to a friend that he was doing the work of two people. A clause in Angell’s contract reportedly required him to pay a £30,000 penalty should he quit in the middle of a project. His family have since campaigned for better workplace practices. (Technicolor said it received no formal complaints about Angell’s treatment, but has since launched new company programmes to support employees.)

Without adequate time or resources to complete their work to a high standard before a film’s release, VFX artists are increasingly being accused by fans and, in some cases, even directors, of shoddy workmanship. (One recent, typical headline in a national newspaper: “Why is the CGI in *She-Hulk* so terrible?”) “When people complain our visual effects look shit, they should know we can make anything look absolutely fucking real,” a senior artist, who has worked on several Marvel films and the Harry Potter series, told me. “Every time I see a shot that looks bad, like, say, the last third of *Black Panther*, all I see is a group of artists who were not given time to finish their shots.”

It is a thankless task. When a VFX artist’s

work is indistinguishable from the real objects, people, plumes of water and bursts of flame they have sought to recreate, it becomes essentially invisible. The untrained viewer notices only when things look wrong – and at a time when there is clout to be had by posting stills on social media that mock imperfect effects, fans are incentivised to prompt pile-ons. Poor management, misery and exploitation has become so commonplace across the industry that VFX artists have coined a term for the experience of working on a film or television series that is underbid, understaffed, subject to unreasonable, inflexible deadlines, and endless directorial nitpicking: “pixel fucked”.

YVES MCCRAE JOINED the VFX industry seven years before he started working on *Cats*, soon after graduating from art school. As a production assistant, his responsibilities included cleaning toilets and fetching takeaway orders. In the evenings he would stay late, teaching himself how to use effects on an unoccupied computer, quizzing his colleagues on the subtleties of the software. His efforts caught the attention of his managers, who allocated McCrae to work on a trailer for *X-Men: Days of Future Past* that was due to be shown at that year’s Comic-Con.

After two weeks, the work was done, and McCrae glumly returned to managing the office. With experience on his CV, however, he began to apply for VFX roles at other studios. He took a job working on *Godzilla*. “I was being paid close to minimum wage, no overtime and asked to do crazy hours,” he recalls, “but that was the only way to get in the door.” Soon, McCrae was routinely working 70-hour weeks, around double the British and North American national average. (One source told me that, in the UK, employment contracts at many effects houses historically included a clause waiving the EU Working Time Directive, which set a maximum 48-hour working week.) “It was exploitative, but those first jobs are so important to get into the industry.”

At MPC, McCrae bounced back and forth between the two struggling projects, but most of his time was spent on *Cats*. He was one of 30 compositors, the artists who merge the VFX with the live footage and other elements to create the finished shots we see in cinemas or at home. McCrae insisted that the team strived to make the shots look as good as possible, but there was a sense that there was only so much they could do. “There just wasn’t enough time, or enough experienced artists, to give it nearly as much polish as such a VFX-heavy movie like this requires,” McCrae said, “We knew it was going to look horrible. But we were all having a fun time working on it.”

One day, while work was progressing, the team learned *Cats* had been shortlisted for an Academy Award for visual effects. “We were all just laughing,” he recalls. “Like: how did this even happen? Which shots did they send in? How do you get shortlisted for

**MANAGERS AT ONE VFX STUDIO
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TO SOCIAL MEDIA TO SHARE
HORROR STORIES.**



an Academy Award that you can't possibly win?" Meanwhile, last-minute changes kept arriving from Hooper and the studio, adding to an already insurmountable log of work. (McCrae disputes the popular internet story that some last-minute CGI work centred on removing the cats' anuses. "I didn't see any buttoholes," he said. "Maybe the fur pointed in a certain way near their butts, and maybe that spiralled out of control, but I don't think there was a design choice to put a buttohole on cast members.")

"When you're working on a film set, every minute that you're not doing something you're burning money, and it's easy to see that, because there are people standing around doing nothing," Andrew, a former senior employee for one of the largest VFX houses, told me. "With VFX, however, directors almost never physically see the creative people working on their film; they are separated from the process. Notes get passed up and down the chain, and it becomes difficult to know exactly what's happening at any given moment. They can't see the money that's burning."

At the world premiere of *Cats* in New York in December 2019, Hooper told reporters that he'd only put the finishing touches on the film and its "digital fur technology" 36 hours earlier. Still, conspicuous mistakes had slipped through. In some scenes, characters' feet did not touch the ground, giving the appearance of feline levitation. "It used to be that you could make changes the last couple of days before release," a former senior MPC employee told me. "Then you put it out. Now you're seeing films getting released to the cinema, and then they're still not happy."

Universal issued a downloadable "patch" for *Cats* a few days after the film debuted in cinemas, designed to fix some of the most egregious errors. But even these after-the-fact changes were insufficient to save the film critically. *The Guardian* panned it as a "CGI nightmare". *Screen Rant* described the film's visual effects as "sloppy and flat-out unfinished".

The New Yorker's film critic imagined audiences leaning forward in their seats and asking of these digital furies: "What in God's creation are they?" Two weeks later, after an accumulation of scathing reviews and meagre box office takings – the film reportedly lost £60 million – Universal pulled *Cats* from its Oscar awards campaign. The same month, MPC Vancouver closed its doors due to, according to a memorandum sent to staff, "external market pressures". (MPC's other studios were unaffected.)

The following February, at the 2020 Oscars ceremony, James Corden and Rebel Wilson took to the stage to introduce the Academy Award for Outstanding Visual Effects dressed in cat costumes, Corden with a tuxedo jacket pulled tight over his non-digital fake fur. Dangling their hands like paws, the pair swiped at the microphone stand before Wilson opened: "As cast members of the motion picture *Cats*, nobody more than us understands the importance of good visual effects." The room erupted in laughter and applause.

Afterwards, McCrae tweeted: "Hey guys, I haven't watched all of the Oscars but I assume these two were really classy and thanked me for working 80 hour weeks right up until I was laid off and the studio closed, right?"

The following day, the Visual Effects Society issued a statement: "On a night that is all about honouring the work of talented artists, it is immensely disappointing that the Academy made visual effects the butt of a joke." By then, McCrae's tweet had garnered more than 120,000 likes.

In the weeks that followed, infuriated VFX artists started speaking out publicly. "Working on Marvel shows is what pushed me to leave the VFX industry," tweeted Dhruv Govil, an artist who had worked on *Spider-Man* and *Guardians of the Galaxy*. "They're a horrible client, and I've seen way too many colleagues break down after being overworked."

The VFX artists had finally, it seemed, had enough.

THE OSCARS WAS not, however, the first time VFX artists had tried to make their voice heard. In 2013, Bill Westenhofer, VFX supervisor on Ang Lee's *Life of Pi*, took to the stage to accept the Academy Award for Best Special Effects. *Life of Pi*, a film in which a boy shares a trans-Pacific boat ride with a tiger, had been a VFX-heavy production: thousands of computer-generated shots were created by the artists at Rhythm & Hues, one of the most established special effects houses. Midway through production, Lee reportedly made a substantial change to the tiger's design. The studio, already financially stretched, chose to absorb the costs, rather than charge Fox for the extra work. Days before Westenhofer accepted the award, Rhythm & Hues had filed for bankruptcy. On stage, Westenhofer tried to draw attention to the artists' plight, but the orchestra drowned out his words less than a minute into the speech with the theme from *Jaws*. (As *Business Insider* reported at the time, the average Oscars acceptance speech clocks in closer to two minutes.)

There was no orchestra to move on the 450 VFX artists who had gathered down the street to protest at working conditions in the industry that had won them an Oscar but lost them their jobs. Many held placards bearing slogans such as, "The visual effects industry is suffering," "My job was outsourced and all I got was this lousy sign," and "This is the first time I've been outside in three months". Rhythm & Hues was not the first VFX studio to fall into administration following a successful project; Digital Domain Media Group, which worked on *Titanic*, had filed for bankruptcy a few months earlier. For some houses, a single intensive project can put the entire company under. There's a quote often brought up in the industry, allegedly made by a producer in 2007: "If I don't put a visual effects shop out of business on my movie, I'm not doing my job."

Paul Allen Newell joined Rhythm & Hues in 1988 as a technical director, overseeing visual effects work for the company. At that time, most of the work was split between advertising commercials and network idents – the swirling logos used before the news, for example – work for which the company won several awards. Even then, however, Newell says the seeds of the current crisis were sprouting. "The profits were so thin that, if you bid for a couple of jobs and didn't get any of them, payroll might be missed or, in the worst case, you could face going out of business," he recalls.

Even back then, Newell routinely saw directors changing their minds late in the process, which meant he and his colleagues would have to work unreasonable hours. "You're not going to go: 'Well, screw you, we're not going to do this, because that's not what we bid on,'" he said. "You're going to make them happy, because you need them to come back."

Later in his career, Newell worked for both Disney and DreamWorks, studios that created much of their own content in-house. "You still

"ON A NIGHT THAT IS ABOUT HONOURING THE WORK OF TALENTED ARTISTS, IT IS IMMENSELY DISAPPOINTING THAT THE ACADEMY MADE VISUAL EFFECTS THE BUTT OF A JOKE."

had punishing deadlines,” he said. “The studios never wanted to change an announced release date so the only way to make late changes is to work longer hours and weekends. The last weeks of making a movie were very rough.”

Changing studios was difficult; artists and animators later discovered they had been prevented from moving between companies and negotiating better salaries and benefits. In 2014, three visual effects artists launched a class action lawsuit alleging that between 2004 and 2010, numerous big studios – including Disney, Pixar, Lucasfilm, DreamWorks Animation, and Sony Pictures – had colluded in setting salary limits and avoiding hiring artists from other studios. (The studios settled the case without admitting liability, paying out a combined £140 million settlement.)

By the time Rhythm & Hues started work on *Life of Pi*, the problems Newell had experienced had only exacerbated, while there appeared to be less willingness to share credit for creative successes. During their acceptance speeches for Best Director and Best Director of Photography, neither Ang Lee nor Claudio Miranda thanked the VFX teams who worked on the film. Bruce Branit, a VFX artist for high-profile TV shows such as *Star Trek: Voyager* and *Lost*, complained on Facebook: “[Where was the mention of] the VFX artists who made the sky, the ocean, the ship, the island, the meerkats and, oh yeah... the tiger.”

The anger still lingers. For many VFX artists, what happened on the *Life of Pi* remains an instructive tale about how Hollywood views their art, upon which modern film depends. “Claudio Miranda won an Oscar for director of photography but it’s like, what do you think he did for that?” says one senior insider. “He is an exceptionally good cinematographer, but for *Life of Pi*, he essentially lit people on green screen. All those skies, all these environments, everything was created by the [visual effects artists]. The disparity between the DP winning the Oscar while the VFX studio goes bust is still striking.”

For Andrew, who has worked on blockbuster films for most major studios, Hollywood executives must shoulder some responsibility and train directors before they assume their first big-budget, special effects-heavy film project. “A director makes one good, well-received indie film and then it’s like, ‘Cool. Can you now do a £150 million VFX-heavy summer blockbuster?’” he explains. Rookie directors are usually paired with an experienced VFX supervisor who can interpret what’s happening and filter out parts of the process that they don’t necessarily need to see. “But then sometimes stuff reaches the director late in the day,” he says. “And then they’re like: ‘What the fuck is this? Change it.’”

Even some experienced directors don’t know how to work with visual effects, said Dylan, who said he was so burned out after working on the Marvel film *Spider-Man: Homecoming*



One visual effects studio went bust after working on *Life of Pi*. *Cats* was critically mauled and its effects ridiculed, despite VFX staff working round the clock to meet deadlines.

that he was unable to work for several weeks. “And the condensed project time means there’s little pre-production time, so they’re going into this without a strong vision, and aren’t able to understand the process.” The result can be chaos. “Often, we’re making up the cinematography in post, by which time the director has checked out.” A few directors, including Jon Favreau and David Fincher, are known in the VFX industry for respecting the art and history of visual effects, and have incrementally built towards VFX-heavy work. The lack of mid-budget films today has eliminated projects on which newer directors might previously have been able to cut their teeth.

The boom in streaming content has at least improved salaries. “In London, you have junior artists a year or two out of university commanding salaries of £40,000 upwards,” Andrew told me. But the ebb and flow of the industry means there may soon be a recession. “Then these companies that hired in a load of juniors at high cost will have to make redundancies.”

Recently, more established, experienced artists have been emboldened to stand up for themselves, and for the industry. Last summer, MPC announced that it was freezing pay rises for all staff. The same month, the company instituted a so-called Red Amber Green scheme, or RAG, whereby a project experiencing severe difficulties would be classed Red, and all team members would be expected to spend five days in the office, removing the possibility for hybrid working conditions. Many staff walked out, rejecting the terms. In September last year, visual effects workers

made a concerted push to unionise with the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees, a US and Canadian trade union that represents more than 150,000 workers in arts, media and entertainment.

“As we’ve seen in other industries, in the early years, companies will burn through 20-year-olds like fuel to grow whatever business they’re in,” said Andrew. “But after a certain point, you’re going to either run out of people, or those who have been in the industry for a decade and now have kids just won’t stand to be treated that way any more.”

Yves McCrae left MPC Vancouver in December 2019, two days before the studio closed down, and joined an effects start-up run by a friend. Unlike some of his colleagues, he has managed to maintain a sense of humour and perspective on what, for many others, has become a dispiriting job. “Everybody is different and has different thresholds for the work they can do, and for what pay,” he says. The excessive working hours and unfeasible demands have not dulled his passion for special effects, first kindled as a cross-legged teenager sat in front of the television watching DVD making-of features of *Star Wars* and *The Lord of the Rings*. The company where McCrae currently works, Barnstorm – which has supplied VFX work for *Avatar: The Way of Water*, season four of *Stranger Things* and *Ted Lasso* – is eager to keep staff rather than churn through them, so, he says, limits crunch periods. “I think if I had only ever seen studios that required crunch-style working conditions all the time, I might have been more likely to consider leaving.”

And where *Cats* has become a lingering industry joke, McCrae reflects on his experiences with a certain fondness. “People can make fun of the VFX in *Cats*, but I know we all did the absolute best we could given the circumstances – I don’t take it personally,” he says.

McCrae appears to represent a new breed of young VFX artist, one who seems less anxious about toeing the company line, and burning out simply to maintain the status quo. Where others have chosen to walk away, moving to more lucrative, less demanding industries, McCrae plans to stay – for now, at least. “We do have control over our own fate,” he said. “It’s not like I wouldn’t love to have a team of people in a union fighting for my value and protection. That sounds great. But working on *Cats*, I saw older artists – people with families – and they would just get up at the end of the day and walk out. And they didn’t get fired. They said, ‘I’m here for 40 hours. If you want me to work here, that is what you can have of me. If you want more, I’ll go find a job somewhere else.’” ❖

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After scaling the 14 meanest mountains on earth in record time, Nepali-born Nims Purja emerged as a powerful champion of the country's Sherpa guides.

He's also become the first celebrity mountaineer of the social media age – and the most controversial figure in the global climbing community.

THE HYPERMANS OF

By Grayson
Schaffer

Photographs
by AF Webb



THE HINDAIAVAS



I strolled into base camp at Ama Dablam, the 22,349-foot peak known as the Matterhorn of the Himalayas, mountaineer Nims Purja was locked in a fierce game of beach volleyball. Just beyond the court sprawled a village of tents, some 65 in all, erected by his guiding company, Elite Expeditions. The outfit is the ultra-ambitious Nims's latest gambit – a business meant to parlay his status as one of the world's most celebrated climbers into a venture that pays more than simply breaking mountaineering records. Perhaps more significantly, though, the Nepali-born Nims wants to use the company to upend the old paradigms of the Himalayan guiding industry by cutting the Sherpa guides in on the largesse. And as with anything Nims tries, he has launched it on a grandly immodest scale.

When I found him on the makeshift volleyball court, Nims and his Sherpa guides were taking on the kitchen crew and getting beaten. Still, it was immediately clear that the 39-year-old Nims is a gifted athlete. With his thin moustache, almond eyes and swooped black hair, he resembles a Bollywood star. And despite standing only five foot seven, he was still able to spike the ball from above the net. The cook crew was spry, however, and kept shooting it back, until finally the hitter behind Nims sent one into the latrine tent.

These days, it's a rare thing to see Nims face defeat. Over the past four years, the former Nepalese special forces soldier has electrified the climbing world and the wider culture beyond. He became megafamous in 2019 by scaling all 14 of the world's 8,000-metre peaks in just six months and six days. After that inventive feat, his notoriety was multiplied by the releases of his book, *Beyond Possible*, and Netflix movie, *14 Peaks*, both of which helped confer a level of power on Nims that climbers seldom achieve. Now, he's deciding how to wield that influence, both for himself and his Sherpa compatriots. He's aimed at nothing less than remaking the Himalayan guiding industry in his own image – and, along the way, is raising questions about what it means to be a mountaineer in the age of the influencer.

Having arranged to meet Nims at his camp at the base of Ama Dablam, where he was leading his final Himalayan expedition of the year, I'd flown by helicopter from Kathmandu to the roadless Sherpa capital of Namche Bazaar, located at just over 3,300 metres. From there, it was a three-day walk up Nepal's Khumbu Valley to the tent city occupied by Elite Expeditions. Around two dozen clients had ponied up roughly £9,000 each to share a rope with one of Nims's Sherpa guides on the 25-day expedition, which would involve about a week of acclimatisation followed by a gruelling two-day summit push. In addition to Elite, there were a dozen or so other outfitters on the mountain, but the teams didn't mix. Like the fancy camps at Burning Man, Elite was roped off with tasteful signs advising "No entry."

Dominating camp were a pair of 30-foot dome tents, where the climbers took their meals. At dinner that night, Nims sat at the head of a T-shaped banquet table in one of them. He gave a weather report and dispensed customised summit plans for each client-Sherpa team from memory. He was surrounded by his patrons, among them several jovial, square-jawed British special forces alums, of the sort who now have successful life-hacking podcasts and large social media followings. Propane heaters purred, and several of his climbers – the ones not currently acclimatising higher up the mountain – sat eating in comfortable armchairs.

There was Madison Loyola, an athletic 30-something with a successful manufacturing company. Kayla Perez, a private-jet flight attendant, had googled "how to climb a mountain" early in the pandemic; now she was here. Michael Green was a Vancouver-based architect who'd figured out how to build timber skyscrapers and gave a TED talk about it, with over a million views.

After dinner, the Sherpas cranked up a local Nepali DJ named Badal and the scene changed into a full-blown dance party. A fifth of rum appeared and Nims filled everyone's cups. Green, the architect, leaned over and assured me, "This is every night."

"I don't care what you do," Nims later said of his policy on both clients and employees getting turnt. "But next day, if you can't operate, that's your fuck-up."

Nims danced for half an hour, dropping into thigh-crushing Cossack leg kicks at one point, and then settled into a chair with a mug. Earlier in the day he'd been irritated that a French climber had died during his descent, and that his outfitter hadn't called Nims to ask for help. "If only they had told my team, 'Could you give us a hand?'" Nims lamented, referring to the staff of 46 able-bodied men in camp. "I have such huge manpower here."

Nims typically has a knack for being near the centre of the action. His photo of a traffic jam of hundreds of climbers queuing near Everest's summit in 2019 became an international news story, as did his many rescues of other climbers that same season. Last September, he organised the recovery of American ski mountaineer Hilaree Nelson's body after she died falling from the summit of Manaslu, the world's eighth tallest peak.

But this time, there was nothing he could do. The guides had gotten the Frenchman off the mountain, but he expired before they could reach a waiting helicopter. The incident had prompted Nims to reflect on his own safety record.

"Thirty-two 8,000-metre expeditions, my brother," he boasted. "All summits. Brought everybody back home exactly the same way they left. Probably fitter and with a better mental attitude. No one in the world has got that track record. I say that with pride."

Nims projects the kind of confidence that isn't long suffered by these mountains. But what happens when someone does die? How would he respond to that?

"No one should die," Nims insisted. "There's no 'What if?'" For Nims, this absolute belief seems less like denial than the daily affirmations of a man who makes Norman Vincent Peale look like a whiner. Nims has a lot of care for his clients, and holds his Sherpa team in the highest regard. He believes he's carrying more than their safety on his back.

He nodded to the Sherpa guys still dancing. "I'm the fucking face of these people, bro," he said. "You'll see it everywhere in Kathmandu. I'm their hope now."

INDEED, HIS NAME was everywhere in Kathmandu, like a flickering signal resolving from the noise of interstellar static. A wobble in an orbit. A telltale shift in wavelength. A new and powerful force had taken hold here. In sleek black sans serif on the hood of the custom white Land Rover that fetched me from Tribhuvan airport: Nimsdai.

Those same seven letters appeared above the glass and steel shopping pavilion annexed to the five-star Marriott that sprang up in the aftermath of the 2015 earthquake, which killed nearly 9,000 Nepalis. Nimsdai is both the flagship mountaineering store in that square and the diminutive Nepali call sign of the man whose name is on every Himalayan climber's lips: Nirmal Purja, AKA Nims Purja, AKA Nimsdai.

It means "Brother Nims." He is family. He is a demigod. He is the second coming of Tenzing Norgay. Only this time, instead of politely supporting his Edmund Hillary, he takes the credit and razzes the best foreign climbers for drifting behind him and his Sherpa crew.

Though he is now in possession of a British passport, Nims was once a barefoot ethnic Magar kid, running in the sweltering streets of Chitwan, near the Indian border. He was one of the uniformed boarding-school boys walking arm-in-arm in the road, dressed in a striped tie



Previous page:
Nims Purja at
the base of Ama
Dablam, a
22,349-foot
Himalayan peak.

This page:
The scene at
Nims's ultra-
lavish 65-tent
base camp.

and a blue cardigan. That was before he joined the Gurkhas, the legendary Nepali infantrymen established by the British Empire, and then, through sheer force of will, became the first Nepali elevated to the Special Boat Service, the Royal Navy's version of the SAS. This despite Nepal's non-existent coastline.

Nims started out humble. This humility wore off. Like the punchline to that joke about how you know there's a Navy SEAL in the room, he tells you of his deeds, his world records, his daring rescues. He has compared himself to Muhammad Ali, Usain Bolt, Neil Armstrong, and Robin Hood, and speaks slogan-ese with a fluency that could reanimate Ron Popeil: *Achieve your new possible! Always a little higher! Giving up is not in the blood!* These and other phrases are printed on everything from coffee cups to the mission patches Nims affixes to the one-piece down summit suits worn by his mountaineer clients.

He says he's the CEO of nine companies, though he won't name them all. His book and film are both autobiographical. The former, a best-seller, reads like the kind of memoir written by American politicians. The latter, Nims says, was Netflix's most popular release of 2021. He gets consistent corporate speaking gigs, and his one-on-one guiding rate up Everest is more than a million dollars.

It's a lot. Nims is a lot. But his hustle and bravado are precisely the things that have allowed him to break into the mainstream from Nepal's deep bench of climbing talent. I've covered mountaineering and Sherpa culture on and off for more than a decade, and while there have always been insanely strong climbers with roots in Nepal, nobody has ever amassed the mind share, as the marketers say, that Nims has. In the process he's gathered a legion of devotees and plenty of critics, all of them hoping to cement his reputation as either a

generational talent among high-altitude mountaineers, or a boastful self-promoter flying perilously close to the sun.

I found it impossible to escape these questions in Kathmandu as I prepared to go meet the man himself. At the airport, I made my way beneath the rotors of an AStar B3 helicopter, noticing before I climbed aboard that it was wrapped in now familiar black lettering: Nimsdai.

THE HELI PUT ME down in Namche Bazaar, which sits in an airy amphitheatre of hillside high above the confluence of the Dudh Kosi and Bhote Koshi rivers. From a ridgeline above town, I could see Ama Dablam – “mother’s necklace” – a granite pinnacle adorned with a hundred-ton pendant of ice near its western crown. Farther in the background rises the squat pyramid of Everest, at 29,032 feet. Chomolungma, as the Sherpas call it, isn’t the prettiest, but it’s so high that it juts into the jet stream and makes a rooster tail in the stratosphere, like it’s clawing at space itself.

Walking the dusty trail beside these mountains produces a kind of vertigo of naked scale. They follow you the way the moon does – Thamserku, Taboche, Cholatse. The path feels static, like a treadmill. For most of us, Himalayan peaks merely inspire awe. But to an unfortunate subset of climbers, they’re as irresistible as a wobbly bookcase is to a toddler. The tallest 14 of the world’s summits, through a chance intersection of geology and the metric system, are known as the 8,000’ers. Above 8,000 metres – about 26,000 feet – your body can no longer adapt to the thinness of the air. This is the Death Zone. You can’t stay here long.

It was on these 14 peaks – all of them located in the Himalayan uplift in the border regions of Nepal, Tibet and Pakistan – that Nims first blew minds. He’d first begun climbing at altitude in 2012, at the age of 29, and four years later reached the summit of Everest as an anonymous client while on leave from the Gurkhas. Then, in 2019, having previously climbed only four of the Death Zone peaks, Nims summited all 14 in just six months and six days. He called it Project Possible, because people who know about such things told him it couldn’t be done. The previous record was a brisk but sensible seven years – one expedition in each of the spring and autumn climbing seasons, between the monsoons and the frigid winter.

Bagging Himalayan peaks as if they were day-trip outings was unheard of. The movie Nims shot and produced debuted on Netflix in November 2021 and elevated Nims and his Sherpa team to social media celebrity status. The film also generated huge international publicity for Elite Expeditions. By mid-2022, Nims had over 2 million followers on Instagram. He also had a client list that he said included numerous billionaires, whose names he won’t reveal, and one Qatari princess, Asma Al Thani, who appears frequently in his feed.

On the way to meet Nims, I sent a WhatsApp message to Garrett Madison, an American outfitter on Ama Dablam that autumn, letting him know that I was coming. “Just visited Nims’s camp today,” Madison replied. “Only three models this time 🤔.” Was Madison worried that Nimsdai and his Elite Expeditions would swallow up the entire Himalayan guiding industry? Not quite. It’s a “different vibe,” Madison said. “Interesting ‘new market’ of clientele. Not my competition, so all good. A rising tide lifts all boats.”

THE MODELS MADISON was referring to were known collectively as the @SwissAlpineGirls. When I rolled into base camp, they were with another Elite detachment over on Lobuche East, a nearby 6,100-metre peak that Nims often advises novices to tackle as their first Himalayan ascent. Among the other clients on Lobuche were Andrew Clayton, a 41-year-old Brit, and Andrew Shaw, who calls himself a “well-being engineer.” Nims’s appeal seems especially strong among the aesthetically inclined, probably due in part to his outsized digital footprint.

But if the social media set was drawn to Nims, the climbing world wasn’t sure what to do with him. Mountaineers knew that Nims had accomplished something significant, but they couldn’t agree on what exactly that was. He had used some of the accoutrements frowned upon by purists, including bottled oxygen and fixed ropes, and had a team of Sherpas guide him in the way that the pace line of seasoned

domestiques slices through wind resistance for the yellow jersey at the Tour de France.

Krzysztof Wielicki, the legendary Polish mountaineer who in 1980 became the first to climb Everest in winter, told a Polish radio station, “It’s more of a statistical achievement,” adding that the feat would not be “written into the history of alpine climbing.”

He felt that others had summited the 14 peaks in far more impressive fashions, among them the South Tyrolean great Reinhold Messner, now 78, who achieved the feat in 16 years without fixed ropes or bottled oxygen, and the late Pole Jerzy Kukuczka, who pulled it off in eight years and used oxygen only on Everest. “It is light years short of Kukuczka and Messner’s class,” Wielicki said of Nims’s Project Possible.

But he failed to grasp the significance of Nims’s innovation, like the guy who stands in front of a Pollock and says, “My kid could do that.” Filmmaker and climber Jimmy Chin points out that while it *is* a logistical feat, “It’s way more than that... You still have to climb the mountains,” often in bad weather.

The fact is, before Nims did it in 189 days, nobody had even considered attempting a fastest known time (FKT) on the 8,000’ers. It was a feat of creativity as much as raw physical talent, and it changed the way people view these mountains. Climbers now routinely attempt multiple 8,000-metre peaks in a season.

Non-climbers sometimes struggle to comprehend the nuances of what makes certain routes difficult. But they do understand a story. And that’s what Nims gave them. It’s neither alpinism nor speed climbing, but something altogether new. He called it, unsurprisingly, “Nims style.” It’s less an unknown runner winning an impossible race than somebody with a healthy appetite and determination realising that they can wipe out the buffet at Bob’s Big Boy. It’s a spectacle. It’s a campaign. It’s *because it’s there*.

One person who was deeply affected by Nims’s new benchmark was a bubbly, dreadlocked 36-year-old skier and runner from Norway named Kristin Harila. Though she hadn’t climbed a single 8,000’er before 2021, last year she decided to break Nims’s record. After stacking up sponsors, she hired a manager, and was guided by Sherpas Dawa Ongju and Pasdawa. In late September, with 12 peaks down, Harila was comfortably outpacing Nims, but the Chinese government wouldn’t give her a permit to climb Shishapangma and Cho Oyu. That ended her run: it was, in fact, logistics that defeated her. She plans to try again this year.

But while Nims’s feats have inspired some, his particular communication style really fires up critics. In the book and film, as much as in conversation, Nims routinely lapses into one-liners and aphorisms as if his life were a screenplay. During an early rescue in *14 Peaks*, he shouts, “Giving up is not in the blood!” which has become his catchphrase. It’s on a T-shirt. He makes extraordinary claims that are difficult to confirm, which produces scepticism in any rational person receiving his story.

At times, Nims has lashed out at reporters for questioning his version of events or attempting to learn about his expeditions without passing through him first. Explorersweb, a small but committed online journal about mountaineering, is among the few to attempt to verify Nims’s claims. “Your information has always been crap,” Nims wrote on Instagram last May after a reporter questioned whether he and Qatari princess Asma Al Thani had started a climb from Camp Two instead of base camp. (Nims says they hadn’t.) The irony is that, as a media property, Nims far outstrips any of the climbing publications that would seek to cover him. And since he insists on controlling the narrative, the only source for info on Nims’s capers ends up being Nims himself.

“My story, I didn’t ever want it to be told by anyone else, because that will never do it justice,” he told me.

Take, for example, the time he was shot by a sniper in Afghanistan. “I tasted the warm, metallic tang of blood in my mouth,” Nims writes in *Beyond Possible*. “A puddle of red grew around me on the floor. For a split second I worried half my face had been shredded away, though I didn’t feel any pain.” Then he discovers that the bullet struck his rifle, not his face, and that he is fine. Still, the puddle of blood! Nims has no obvious scars on his face, and the Royal Navy doesn’t comment on such matters. It’s not that it couldn’t have happened exactly the way he wrote



At night, Nims's Ama Dablam base camp often turns into a disco. The mountaineer has a simple policy on boozing at altitude: "Next day if you can't come and operate, that's your fuck-up."

it. But it's the type of facile twist that feels too cute for real life, like a sheriff's badge stopping a bullet in a Western.

Nims's story is full of these pulpy bits, such as when, as a child, he tested himself by swimming across a river near Chitwan and realised he hadn't reserved any stamina to get back (straight out of *Gattaca*), or when he discovered he was out of shape at Annapurna and trained with boulders (*Rocky IV*).

But Nims has an ace in the hole: The man whose achievements in the mountains are the standard by which all others are judged; the unimpeachable arbiter of high-altitude cred, who deflated poseurs for using oxygen and set the timeless benchmark for the ethics of alpinism with his 1971 essay "The Murder of the Impossible"; the South Tyrolean hardman whose deeds were so far ahead of his time that he, too, was doubted as a fabulist. Reinhold Messner has emerged as Nims's biggest booster.

"Some climbers criticised Nirmal, but I didn't understand why," says Messner in *14 Peaks*. "He was doing it in this way, otherwise it's not possible in such a short time." Game recognises game.

IN CASE WE'RE not clear on this, doing the impossible gives adventure bros a boner. It's tied up in old ideas of masculinity and validation. The problem is that the big obvious firsts – climbing the tallest mountain, visiting the bottom of the ocean, discovering America – have all been done. And it turns out that with proper training and modern gear, most impossible feats become merely difficult.

And so they equivocate, aggregate, elongate, and accelerate settled business until it once again seems to qualify as virgin territory. The relatively mild Seven Summits – climbing the tallest peak on each continent – was invented by Texas entrepreneur Dick Bass in 1985. Messner's 1987 book *All 14 Eight-Thousanders* chronicled a 16-year campaign through the Death Zone. Project Possible was in this vein: audacious but what the reviewers at *Pitchfork* might call derivative work.

Nims is sensitive to criticism. He reads the comments. And rather than try to defend his achievement, he set his sights on a new one for late 2020. There's a single, glaringly obvious prize in mountaineering that has rebuffed the world's finest climbers since it was first attempted in 1987: climbing K2 in winter. If Project Possible was a cool trick, this was climbing's sub-two-hour marathon, 62 home runs in the post-steroid era, GOAT-level stuff.

"I knew I had to do this for the country," Nims said, "for the people, and only I could do it the right way."

At 8,611 metres, the world's second-highest peak – just 237 metres

lower than Everest – K2 was the only 8,000'er still unclimbed between mid-December and mid-March. That's because the Karakoram, eight degrees latitude north – think southern New England versus Florida – puts the Savage Mountain in a different league entirely. Not only is it colder and more difficult to climb even in mild weather, but during winter the temperature and barometric pressure at the summit mean that, atmospherically speaking, it has a similar altitude density as Everest. As far as a climber's lungs and physiology are concerned, both mountains have a perceived altitude of around 9,100 metres in January.

Teams had been hunting winter K2 for decades, but 2021 was a particularly tricky time because of the pandemic. On top of that, Nims had to assemble a new team. Some of the Sherpas had left the team after Project Possible. Nims thinks other local outfitters poached his talent, telling them, "Why only Nims is famous? Why are you not famous?" he told me. "It really hurt." Nims thought they were on board with a supporting role, but ultimately the story had been too much *Lone Survivor* and not enough *Band of Brothers*. (The subtitle of *Beyond Possible* is "One Man, 14 Peaks, and the Mountaineering Achievement of a Lifetime.")

"Look, even if I didn't have the team from Project Possible, I would still have made it. If today I chose five completely different guys, I could make it, because [the task] needs leadership," Nims said. "Ninety-nine percent of the Sherpas are at the same level.

"You need to convince people – to give them that inner energy," he went on. "That's when you become extraordinary. And that's what I did for K2 winter. I said, 'Guys, I'm going in. Do you want to come?' And some of them said no."

But Mingma David was still ride-or-die. Geljen, another Sherpa, was game too. Nims assembled a team of six, also including Mingma Tenzi, a world-beating climber with nearly thirty 8,000-metre summits under his belt, and Pemchhiri and Dawa Temba, both fully accredited international guides with about 20 Everest ascents between them. Along with two cooks, a swarm of Pakistani porters, and their base camp manager, the group set off from Skardu, Pakistan, on 21 December 2020. As they rolled out, Nims cautioned reporters about dishing "from the comfort of their warm couch at home." On Instagram he wrote: "You don't know anything about my plans, and you will never know unless I want you to!"

AS A TEAM, Nims's K2 squad was stacked with Sherpas, just like the crews that had come before them. As early as the 1922 British

expedition of Everest, Westerners relied on Sherpas for support. Seven of them died on the job during that first outing a hundred years ago. While it's since become vogue for the best foreigners to climb without Sherpa support, the innovative wrinkle on Nims's trip was that it involved Sherpas climbing without Western oversight. It's been a long time coming.

While universally loved, and admired for their strength, work ethic, and commitment to helping foreigners reach the tallest summits, Sherpas tend to get mentioned in the collective sense even when their accomplishments are utterly singular. Achievements are casually diluted, attributed to evolutionary adaptations for handling their homeland's dizzying altitudes.

Ethnic Sherpas migrated into the Khumbu region from Tibet about 600 years ago. Their language is spoken, not written, so there are no classic Sherpa memoirs or histories other than oral ones. The community was tiny, subsisting on potatoes grown on terraces scratched into some of the planet's most challenging farmland. Like many ethnicities in Nepal, they use *Sherpa* as a surname. And most Sherpa given names, regardless of gender, are days of the week: Dawa, Mingma, Lakpa, Phurba, Pasang, Pemba, Ngima.

the summit with a client, which he did on his first attempt. Not long afterwards, his uncle Dorjee Khatri wanted him to meet the "military guy" he'd been guiding. This, of course, was Nims.

"We started talking and chatting, and then we became close friends," recalled Mingma David. They crossed paths at the South Col of Everest in 2016, when Nims went for his first summit, though it wasn't until 2018 that they climbed together for the first time. It's here that Mingma David's story diverges from the ordinary.

During those years, Sherpas typically made about £5,000 per Everest climbing season. It's a bit more today. When Nims decided to get into the guiding business, he began to pay his top guides up to £58,000 a year – more in line with the amounts foreign guides are paid – and in the case of Mingma David, and later Mingma Tenzi, offer them a combined 25 per cent equity stake in Elite Expeditions. Sherpas living in Nepal already do well by local standards. The tourism industry, which was projected to bring in about £250 million in 2022, has always been a bright spot in the country's subsistence economy, but earning deep into six figures is life-changing. "Me and Nims, we are never talking about money, because we built this company together," said Mingma David, who handles



From left: The peak of Ama Dablam, known as the Matterhorn of the Himalayas; trekking from the town of Namche Bazaar into the mountains; a balmy day at Ama Dablam base camp.

The net effect is that a Sherpa phone book would be the most useless document of all time. Mingma Gyabu Sherpa was a star on the US Travel Channel's 2016 series *Everest Air*, where as a 27-year-old he performed 52 rescues in a single season. He noticed the phone book problem as he was trying to raise his profile. "All of the people had the same name," he told me. "And I'm trying to find a [new] name. I added the middle name David. After that, I was easier to recognise."

The story of Mingma David could be the story of any climbing Sherpa in Nepal. He was born in 1989 in Lelep, in the Taplejung district on the slopes of Kanchenjunga. When he was 17, he got a job as a porter. He carried two foreigners' trekking bags, weighing a total of over 30kg, despite being just 55kg himself. "It's a lot," said Mingma David, wincing. "I cried a lot." For his trouble, he was paid 300 rupees per day, about £3. In 2009, he landed a job as a kitchen helper at Manaslu base camp. For that trip he got a 10,000-rupee (£111) gear stipend and 800 rupees (£9) per day.

By 2010, at 21, he was ready to climb. "I did two trainings in Kathmandu," Mingma David explained. "A seven-day basic introductory training and seven days of rescue technique. And then straight to Everest."

A local outfitter gave him about £1,330 as a gear stipend. His pay was still 800 rupees per day, but he made an additional £415 if he reached

personnel while Nims drums up clients and investment.

Two people I spoke to who have a long history in Nepal's climbing industry told me that they wonder about Nims's possible profit margins with such lavish base camps and highly paid staff, while also charging thousands less than some other outfitters (unless, of course, you want Nims himself as your guide). In Nims's book, he describes working with a business partner – "an anonymous accomplice" – to contact a series of potential investors.

Perhaps as important as the money is the democratisation of certain star-making tools now available to everyone. For instance, Mingma David has his own social media brand, which makes it impossible to lump him together with other Sherpas as "the help." This is the biggest thing Nims has changed; he's shifted the gravity in the room, so the Sherpas in his orbit are holding the biggest megaphone.

Instead of only supporting foreign climbers' ambitions, they're forming dream teams to dunk on these mountains themselves. They're flying their own drones and shooting their own movies. Sponsors have ponied up. Fans flock to them online. These guys aren't trying to get sponsored by the North Face team – they're directly challenging them. There's no going back.

Interestingly, multiple people have pointed out that Nims isn't

actually a Sherpa himself, and is a British citizen. (Nepal doesn't allow dual citizenship.) *The New York Times* even made this point. But it feels like an unfair attempt to rob Nims of his origin story because he left Nepal, had success in the UK, and found his way to the climbing community as a client rather than a porter. So I asked him point-blank: Does he consider himself a Sherpa?

"Yes," he said. "Sherpa is not a caste, it's a brand. It's also an ethnic group, and a climbing community." The distinction he's making is one that flows directly out of 20th-century colonialism, according to which all porters on early British Himalayan expeditions were aggregated as "sherpas," regardless of ethnicity, and all addressed their clients as "sahib," or sir. As a result, the former, when spelled with a lowercase *s*, still refers to a job title. In fact, many of the sherpas on British expeditions were lowlanders from a mix of ethnic groups, including Nims's.

In his biography of Tenzing Norgay, British writer Ed Douglas notes that "Sherpas are the most famous mountain tribe in the world, with an immediate advantage over other ethnic groups in Nepal... Until recently, all kinds of tribes adjacent to the Sherpas would adopt the name 'Sherpa' to boost their prospects of employment."

Nims shares the sentiment, but doesn't appear to view it as

During their first acclimatisation rotation, Nims proposed an alliance with Mingma G from Imagine Nepal. "I said, 'Bro, why you want to compete?'" Nims recounted. "You got three guys, and I'm a team of six. Rather than having all this rivalry between the same Nepalese team, why don't we work together?"

Then the three returned to base camp to recuperate, which on Planet Nims means only one thing. "After the plan, we make party," said Mingma Tenzi. "All-night party."

"We finished more than 12 bottles of whisky," said Nims. "That's the first time I threw up." Here the extreme cold came in handy, as Nims was able to simply toss the frozen brick of vomit from his tent the following morning.

Climbers watching from afar paid close attention. Among them was respected German climber Ralf Dujmovits, who on 28 December took to Instagram to warn that K2 might be brought low by mountaineering's ultimate performance-enhancing drug. "I would find it a real pity if someone steals the first winter ascent of K2 by using supplemental oxygen," he wrote. "The general public might see this 'conquering' of K2 as a great feat, but the first winter ascent should be left to those who can do it by fair means."



From left: Nims surveys the scene at base camp; a mule carrying supplies on the trail in Nepal's Khumbu region; climbers picking out snacks ahead of their ascent.

appropriation. "If you look into the history of climbing, Magar were some of the first to climb with the British expeditions," said Nims. "Now Tamang are climbing; Rai are climbing." It's the mantle of the underdog that Nims has assumed, even though he's no longer the underdog. "That is my identity," Nims proclaimed. "*I define my identity.*"

K2 BASE CAMP, deep in the Pakistani Karakoram, was a mosh pit of humanity when Nims and his guys set up their camp in late December 2020. Not only were three teams sprawling there, but two of them had even signed up commercial clients for what would surely be a nasty and perilous undertaking.

The pandemic had shut down the spring and summer seasons across the Himalayas, and about 85 stir-crazy hardmen were eager to make questionable life choices on the standard Abruzzi Spur route. In addition to Nims's team, there were two other Sherpa groups, one from Imagine Nepal and the other from Seven Summit Treks, who'd arrived earlier in the month.

Because of the valuable prize at stake, inter-team meetings had an air of gamesmanship. "We were competing against everyone," said Nims. "I was like, 'Hey, guys. You think you are really good? Why you want to know our plans?'"

Interestingly, when Krzysztof Wielicki subdued Everest in winter, back in 1980, he'd used bottled oxygen and nobody tried to discredit him. Indeed, by the standard of Dujmovits (and many other alpinists), Everest has seen only a single winter ascent by fair means. That was when Ang Rita Sherpa, known as the Snow Leopard, did it with little fanfare on 22 December 1987, while guiding a Korean climber. Ang Rita was easily the strongest and most prolific high-altitude climber of the late 20th century, but his talents were always in support of others. He died humbly in 2020, at age 72, after suffering a stroke in 2017, probably due to complications from his many years at altitude.

Between New Year and the second week of January, the weather was abominable. Then came a report that a climbing window might open up after 13 January. Nims gathered up his ad hoc team, which now included Mingma G and his two Sherpa compatriots, Dawa Tenjin and Kilu Pemba. Additionally, they'd recruited Sona Sherpa from Seven Summit Treks. Nims had strategised not just against the mountain but against the remaining teams – and the detractors he knew would be watching from home.

"My biggest thing was how to make this clear-cut to the rest of the world, where the evidence speaks that the Nepalese climbers are the best," said Nims. He didn't just want to put himself on the summit and call it



In 2021, Nims became the first person to ever summit K2 in winter, and he did it without bottled oxygen.

good. He'd been chastened by the hard feelings after his 14 Peaks project. No, he wanted to show the utter dominance of the Nepali climbers as a unit. They'd climb together and summit as a team. The only way Nims knew he could enforce the gentleman's agreement was if he stayed near the front of the pack.

And in order to confound the other climbers, Nims wanted to launch for the peak from well below Camp Four, the usual departure point. "That's why I changed the whole strategy, brother," explained Nims. "I planned to climb from Camp Three so nobody could follow us."

Lastly, there was the issue of climbing style. The team had always planned to use oxygen, but Nims had other ideas and tried to have others join him in his temperance. Mingma David recalled being a little shocked when Nims told him that one or two people from their team would need to climb without oxygen. "He tried to convince me, 'Mingma, you want to do without oxygen?' He tried hard, and I said no." Mingma David was a veteran of several K2 expeditions, and knew what lay ahead.

At that point, Nims knew that he'd have to be the one to try without oxygen. He told only Mingma David and Mingma Tenzi of his plan. They left base camp on 13 January. By 2.30am on the night of 15 January, they were at Camp Three, ready to launch. Mingma

Tenzi took the lead, with Imagine Nepal's Dawa Tenjin belaying him as he fixed pitch after pitch of rope above Camp Four. Nims and Mingma David stayed just behind the leaders, passing them rope. Mingma Tenzi was a force, pounding snow stakes, wrenching ice screws, fastening length after length. They were 10 of the strongest mountaineers in history, all pulling towards their own goal, with no clients to slow them down.

Just before 5pm local time on 16 January, Mingma Tenzi finished his heroic push. The men grouped up and then, while singing the Nepali national anthem and walking arm in arm, they knocked the bastard off. Nims, of course, was holding the selfie stick.

THE CLIMBING WORLD was in shock. The Nepalis had gone up the mountain, and suddenly there was a post on Nims's social channels announcing victory by all 10 of them. Not only had they succeeded, but they'd made it look kind of easy. The post was uploaded by Nims's base camp manager, Ashok Rai, after Nims radioed down from the summit. He couldn't have anyone scoop him. After that, Nims went dark. The team still needed to make it back off the mountain, as the sun was setting.

Forty-eight hours after summiting, Nims posted the summit picture

and finally made his big reveal: He'd climbed the mountain totally without oxygen. No, he told me, he hadn't used it in his tent, or while he slept, or on the descent.

"His capacity and ability at that altitude has to be superhuman," Jimmy Chin later told me.

Nims's detractors were incredulous, and his insistence on controlling the narrative may have fuelled their doubts. To compound the tension, five climbers – Sergi Mingote, Juan Pablo Mohr, John Snorri, Ali Sadpara, and Atanas Skatov – all died on the mountain before that year's winter season was finished. Onlookers surmised that Nims's team had cut the fixed ropes as they descended so nobody could follow them. Nims stayed silent.

But when climbers returned to the mountain the following summer, the Sherpas' ropes were still fixed all the way to the summit. "Thank God," said Nims. "Mother Nature speaks. The people who died were still attached to the rope."

Denis Urubko, the veteran Russian-Polish alpinist who climbed the 14 peaks without oxygen and notched the first winter ascents of both Gasherbrum II and Makalu, was the most outspoken. "The press often buys shit because it looks like chocolate," Urubko told Explorerweb. "I saw his pictures and the summit video. It is impossible to be like that on K2's summit without oxygen. Least of all to keep pace with a crew of climbers on oxygen."

Notably, when Reinhold Messner and Peter Habeler claimed the first ascent of Everest without oxygen in 1978 – taking a mere eight hours to ascend from Camp Four, and only 45 minutes to descend – none other than Tenzing Norgay told Reuters that he didn't believe them. Climbers on oxygen typically take 12 to 14 hours on the way up. "Some experts," Habeler later wrote, believed that the two alpinists "had allowed a sniff of [oxygen], at least at intervals."

Chin has no problem accepting Nims's claims. "They had an opportunity to show the world what they're actually capable of when they were climbing for themselves," he said, adding, "It's arguably the most difficult winter ascent ever done. And they did it in a style that was very respectable." If Nims was lying, there are nine men who would have seen the telltale hose running from his face mask into his jacket. If there was a conspiracy, nine men would have to maintain it.

When I met Nims at his base camp in November, he was still fuming at Urubko. "Bro, why are you even saying that?" he grumbled to me. "You're just lowering yourself. You will see in the movie, 'cause everything is documented. Your extreme is my normal."

DURING MY TIME with Nims, I found him charming and charismatic. I watched him manage the ambitions of two dozen clients, while also juggling logistics and a wife and young daughter back home.

Nims is at the point where the greatest risks to his success (falling into a crevasse notwithstanding) are of his own making. The three Ls of billionaire Charlie Munger's warning to successful people – liquor, ladies, and leverage – all appeared to be in plentiful supply. There was the steady flow of attractive influencers moving through camp, the nightly rum-fuelled party, and the high stakes of launching an outfitter and quickly growing it to scale. The temptation for somebody like Nims is to start believing in his own myth.

Though their stories are wildly different, the latter years of Tenzing Norgay, the most famous climber Nepal has ever produced, may offer a cautionary tale. Tenzing was fabulously unprepared for the level of global fame he faced upon his return from Everest in 1953.

In the aftermath, he became the face of all Nepali people, revered by millions. He was the director of a climbing school in Darjeeling and met thousands of fans alongside baseball legend Mickey Mantle at New York's Yankee Stadium. Tenzing had three wives and seven children, and wasn't always faithful. "Towards the end of his life," Ed Douglas wrote in *The Guardian* after Norgay's death, "Tenzing had struggled with loneliness and alcoholism."

In recent months, Nims has had a string of what he hopes is merely bad luck. On 21 September last year, when he turned on his phone after landing in Kathmandu to begin the autumn guiding season, he learned

that there had been a fire at the offices of Elite Expeditions, in the residential Kapan neighbourhood of Kathmandu. Three of his staff died: Ashok Rai, the base camp manager from K2; Karsang Tenjing Sherpa, who was Mingma David's brother; and their liaison officer Tsewang Sherpa. Elite Expeditions had been storing highly flammable oxygen cylinders in the office, which exploded, but the initial cause of the fire is still under investigation.

Among the businesses Nims is starting is a school for skydiving, a skill he honed in his 10 years as a special forces operator. But about a month after the fire, on 14 October, while he was training with professional skydiver Dean Waldo in Spain, the two became entangled during a training exercise. Waldo was above and behind Nims, and punched through Nims's parachute, becoming trapped in the fabric about 3,500 feet up. Nims cut away his primary chute and landed safely with his reserve, but Waldo cratered and died. All of this occurred only two weeks before our meeting.

"I'm one of those extreme athletes right now who have seen more death than anybody else in the world," he said. "So yeah, somehow I have got this ability to be able to box things off and then move on."

AT BREAKFAST ON the second morning at Ama Dablam base camp, Nims picked up the radio to talk to Madison Loyola, who'd just reached the summit. Through the plastic window of the giant dome, we could just make out the antlike dots of climbers on the final push to the top. "It's so beautiful," said Loyola. "I'm crying frozen tears."

"There's no such thing as bad weather," Nims radioed back as an affirmation. "Only bad effort." (He might need to workshop that one before printing it on a T-shirt.)

I shared a helicopter back to Kathmandu with several of Nims's clients, including Agnes Fischer, one of the @SwissAlpineGirls. She'd climbed Lobuche East but had been battling a stomach bug and decided not to climb Ama Dablam with her friends. That evening I met her and a couple of Nims's other clients at the Marriott bar for drinks. The room features high ceilings and a tall bookcase full of expensive-looking magnums.

Suddenly, Fischer was staring at her phone with a hand over her mouth. Somebody called Andrew had just died on Lobuche, she said. He was one of Nims's Elite Expedition clients, maybe one she'd met. A few seconds later Nims texted her. "Can you not tell people before it comes from official plz," he texted.

Andrew turned out to be Andrew James Clayton, the 41-year-old Brit. He'd felt sick while attempting to reach the summit, and his Sherpa guide walked him back down to camp. Later that afternoon, he was offered an evacuation by helicopter. Instead, Clayton entered his tent, fell asleep, and never woke up.

"It was a reminder that we're not invincible," said Nims weeks later. "I'm just extremely sorry that it happened under the banner of Elite Expeditions." But he will do everything in his power to prevent loss of life in the short run. Like during *14 Peaks*, after he'd mortgaged his house to fund the project and still stopped to rescue other climbers. "I risked my summit chances on Dhauligiri," said Nims. "I risked the mission of climbing all 14 peaks."

Nims has seen so much death in his career that his view of it isn't like yours or mine. And he isn't about to start second-guessing his purpose just because he's suffered a client casualty. "Death is certain once you are born," he said.

He was calling from Los Angeles, where he was doing some motivational speaking. He was already looking ahead to 2023, when he would be guiding 13 of the 14 8,000-metre peaks, including Everest. Soon he would be back in the mountains, leading clients, rescuing victims, sparring with rivals, and scripting the next chapter of his mythos. You can almost see him squinting into the sun as he delivers his final line: "I must continue my journey, because I have a bigger goal." ❧

GRAYSON SCHAFFER is a writer based in Santa Fe, New Mexico, US, and an editor at large at Outside.



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1. Part of the **AVAIL** flagship Signature Range, the Kiros is a blend of bold design and strong materials. Its handsome grey chronograph dial and luxury brown vintage leather strap make this a standout timepiece. Features also include luminous index and hands. AVAIL has become well known for its premium timepieces and quality craftsmanship, all without typical industry mark-ups. **2. Benton Watches** is a watch brand focused on evolving the fashion industry by connecting timeless watches with the needs of the world. They strive to deliver a modern take on traditional styles with simplicity in mind and they never overpower, but rather accentuate their customers' best features. Their goal is to improve the environment as well as the lives of others by giving 10% of every watch sale to a good cause. **3.** The original design of the **Abback** watch appeals at first glance to all enthusiasts of the legendary 2cv. Their watch is powered by a Swiss quartz Ronda movement, protected by a 316L steel case with satin finish. The glass is anti-reflective and the black leather strap is adorned with red stitching details. With its ideal dimensions, its thickness of 9mm, it is the perfect accessory for all occasions. Being a limited edition piece, each model is numbered instead of the mileage indicator. Each watch is delivered with a card attesting to its authenticity and presented in a premium brown leather case. **4. BWG Bavarian Watch** is your new premium watch brand without the excessive price tag. A sustainable, durable, high quality watch that fits the wrist perfectly whilst looking incredibly stylish and dapper. Inspired by the culture of Munich, founder and designer Frank has produced a real luxury German watch where tradition meets high tech and every material has been carefully chosen for the best quality, durability and appearance. Unique to you, choose your dial design and colour and switch up your strap for whatever the occasion or activity. Wear perfection on your wrist with BWG. **5.** In a sea of lookalikes, the newly unveiled **Möels & Co. 528** offers a distinguished design in the watch industry. This mid-century inspired watch has won the 2022 European Product Design Award and is unisex. Priced at just under £1,000, Möels & Co's maiden foray into wristwatches is surprisingly appealing, both in terms of style, features and value. Visit moelsandco.com and follow @moelsco on IG. **6. FineWatchesBerlin** is a labour of love for father and daughter Wilfried and Mia-Phyllis Liefer, who launched the business together back in 2017. Colourful Bauhaus Automatic Watches, made in Germany. In their unique interpretation of the classic Bauhaus watch, you will discover many subtle design details to appreciate throughout your busy day, gentle reminders of how precious you and your time really are. Have a break, take a look, enjoy your time, colour your life. From Berlin with love.

GQ's Lookbook

ALUNIA



Alunia's mission is to create artisanal pieces that reflect cosmopolitan panache while simultaneously showcasing traditional craftsmanship. Alunia employs a unique approach to traditional luxury cuts, weaving familiarity and contemporary design elements with a refreshing take on chic simplicity. Visit alunia.com to discover more and follow @alunia_world on IG.

ELIZABETTA UOMO



designs are inspired by the culture and nature of Italy. Visit elizabetta.eu and IG: @elizabettaboutique

Founded in 2004, ELIZABETTA UOMO is a small mother-daughter business that designs silk accessories for men that are entirely produced in Como, Italy, bringing luxury Italian quality to the world. Elizabetha's

DCYPLN



DCYPLN.com for more info and follow @DCYPLN on IG.

DCYPLN are gaining attention since launching in 2020. The British brand's striking athleisure wear is designed for movement, without getting textile technical. DCYPLN use soft fabrics that flex, with a dynamic aesthetic. Their ethos is 'Planet Over Profit', producing limited collection runs to help reduce landfill. DCYPLN. Against All Odds. Visit

MARAI



premium market. Visit marai.co.uk and follow @maraiofficial on IG.

MARAI is an independent clothing brand that provides a collection of technical, transitional, transeasonal clothing. Headed up by a father and son team with a combined total of 38 years of experience in the fashion industry, MARAI utilises minimalist design in conjunction with sophisticated fabric choices in an attempt to bring the upper echelon of fashion back to the

RAWNINETY



Visit rawninety.com and follow @rawninety on IG.

Rawninety creates rugged yet refined genderless jewellery that's designed to be admired for a lifetime. Existing in the crossroad between modern technique and raw art, their recycled range heroes unique aesthetics, crafted for wearers that withhold these very traits. Rawninety accessories are for those that have a sharp eye for detail and a desire to maintain sustainable standards.

GQ's Lookbook

FLOWER INSTINCTS



Flower Instincts is releasing its new Magic Ball collection which is based on the world of retro gaming. A strong and childish universe where we find their emblematic pair of sneakers accompanied by a high quality Varsity Jacket and an oversized hoodie. The whole collection will be available on their website.

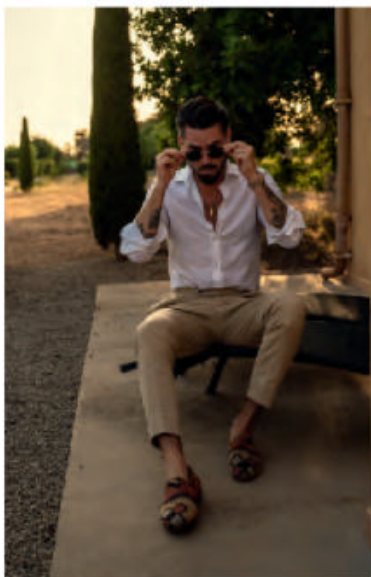
Visit flowerinstincts.com and follow on IG: @flowerinstincts to see more.

LOBATOFFICIAL



With only two collections, LOBATOFFICIAL has already imposed its vision of streetwear with its own very recognisable style and has seduced artists like the Colombian megastar Maluma. The Portuguese brand offers creative pieces for both men and women with importance placed on details and a strong dedication to quality. Visit lobatofficial.com and follow @lobatofficial on IG.

ESGENERIS



esgeneris present their handcrafted colourful designer men's shoes from vintage kilim. Be sure to stand out with these shoes, a piece of art made by artisans using recycled oriental rugs is their timeless loafer design. Each pair of shoes is one of a kind. Model: Danielo Costa. Visit esgeneris.com and follow @esgeneris on IG.

COLLECTIVE ORIGINAL



Collective Original, established in 2021, has taken the streetwear and accessories scene by storm through their design of influential jewellery pieces and clothing inspired by the culture in the dance and music industries. Each piece of jewellery represents a certain individual engineered to last a lifetime, use code GQ25 for 25% off all pieces from their range (expires 27/02/23). Follow on IG: @collectiveoriginal and visit collectiveoriginal.com

LOVEANDPATIENCE



LOVEANDPATIENCE is an up and coming streetwear brand from Germany that focuses on bringing culture into the streetwear scene. Established in 2022, the brand name serves as inspiration for people to work towards their dreams with the power of love and patience. Visit loveandpatience.de and follow @loveandpatienceclo on IG.

BALANCE NOT AVAILABLE



Balance not available is a lifestyle label from southern Germany founded by Leon Lenski with the vision to create a concept that conveys a holistic feeling where creativity and communication coexist. The contemporary label addresses current societal issues through a creative way of expression whilst always maintaining an eye for sustainability. The beauty is in imperfection and asymmetry. Visit balancenotavailable.com and follow on IG: @balancenotavailable

DON BROKERS



Don Brokers is a luxury streetwear brand based in Chicago, Illinois, founded by Justin Sapp. Don Brokers aims to create timeless high quality pieces, showcasing both high end fashion and streetwear fashion. The Autumn-Winter'22 Collection is the perfect showing of versatility. Presented is their handcrafted cut and sewn "Phantom" Biker jacket.

Visit donbrokers.com and follow @donbrokers on IG.

A.S COLLECTION



A.S Collection is a luxury streetwear brand, designed in Melbourne, Australia. The brand's aim is simply to create high quality and long-lasting garments that you can wear for years to come. They strive to create unique pieces amongst their limited edition collections, meaning each item you purchase is extremely valuable and rare. Follow them on IG @ascollectionthebrand and visit ascollection.store

KROOL JEWELS

The Form Fitted in Gold is a unique addition to the Krool range of gold rings and jewellery. Featuring a locally sourced hand cut Mother of Pearl Flush set with a harmoniously Fitted Wedder included to hug the edge of the signet. Visit krool.com.au and follow @krooljewels on IG.

MENGLORIA

Join the next generation of modern gentlemen with Mengloria footwear. A contemporary brand at the forefront of the luxury shoe market, Mengloria embraces a minimal and modern design philosophy. From urban classic sneakers to refined loafers, each pair makes waves throughout the style scene. Visit mengloria.com and follow @mengloria.co on IG.

FULLORD

Fullord presents their Maya ring in 18 carat rose gold with black ceramics and diamonds. The Maya rings feature 3 distinct bands that turn one on top of the other adorned with a squared ceramic motif and round cut diamonds. Designed in Switzerland and made in Italy. Visit fullord.com and follow on IG: @fullordgeneva

ANDEERST

ANDEERST defines itself by its calm expression, its innovative cut and construction and pays absolute attention to detail in every garment. The brand develops progressive silhouettes and irregular proportions made for anyone. Their mission is to deliver an unmatched sensation when it comes to fabrics, workmanship and design. ANDEERST values durable and high quality clothing, defying both seasons and gender. Visit andeerst.com and follow on IG: @andeerst_official

**HEN'S TEETH**

For Davide Biondi, Hen's Teeth originates from the wish to create a timeless standard kit of clothes, anything you could need, contained in a bag. It is based on what history has always considered immortal icons, articles of clothing which have stood the test of time and above all, are strictly "Made in Italy". Visit hensteeth.it and follow on IG: @hensteethitaly

ARMONICCI

Hailing its Italian heritage, ARMONICCI has gained immense popularity as a luxury minimal streetwear brand. ARMONICCI has become a favourite among musicians and other celebrities. Combining Italian and British street culture, ARMONICCI are redefining the streetwear scene uniting it with their minimalist philosophy. ARMONICCI uses the highest quality of fabrics while staying committed to delivering excellent craftsmanship. Visit armonicci.com and follow @armonicci on IG.

HOUSE OF CAVANI

Menswear specialists House of Cavani are championing a new era of formal wear. Drawing inspiration from English traditional styles and Italian customary, Cavani cleverly blur the lines with timeless smart casual pieces to provide the complete outfit for every occasion. Cavani is a premium one stop shop for every 21st century gentlemen's wardrobe, well known for dressing household names and sought after influencers. This international brand is breaking the mould this year with essential investment pieces, like the Caridi Olive Check Three Piece Suit, perfect for winter weddings whether you're the groom or guest, available in four other classic colours for you to choose from.

Visit cavani.co.uk and follow @houseofcavani on IG

GQ's Lookbook

FUNERAL APPAREL



Funeral Apparel believe in pushing the limits. They are passionate about the notion that personal style and fashion are one of the most powerful forms of self-expression. Shown here is part of their striking Family Ties line. Made in Los Angeles. Visit funeralapparel.com and follow

@funeralapparel on IG.

MANA THE MOVEMENT



MANA is built on the philosophy to live in harmony with the environment. Founders Avneet and Sunny combine their love for fashion and appreciation for the planet to create their luxury garments. They follow in the footsteps of their family who worked in clothing and textile as early as the 1960s. With an understanding of the negative impacts of manufacturing on climate change, they bring a conscious approach to an industry their family has roots in. MANA ensures each garment is made from sustainably sourced materials and manufactured responsibly. Visit manathemovement.com and follow @mana_the.movement on IG.

SWAINE LONDON



"The House of British elegance since 1750" has launched its new collection illustrating enchanting luxury leather pieces. The bag worn by James Bond himself now has its long-awaited feminine counterpart. Traditional in design with a contemporary twist, The Bond Girl Bag reflects the modern-day Bond Girl: powerful, daring, and confident. This version features an elegant black exterior with a vivid surprise inside.

Visit swaine.london and follow @swaineofficial on IG.

HOMESICK NY



HOMESICK NY is an American independent streetwear brand that delivers classic silhouettes with vintage throwback appeal. The Formula Cargo Jacket combines the sensibility of a work jacket with embroidered graphic and thoughtful details, such as their signature "H" seam, to pay homage to 1980's automobile culture and classic American workwear. Shop Homesick NY at homesickny.com and follow @homesick_ny on IG.

CORRUPTED ERA



Corrupted Era is a clothing brand founded by Pippo in 2021, based in Belgium. The young brand wants to promote inclusion and freedom of expression through fashion. Since its creation, Corrupted Era has made a name for itself by offering clothing for people who like to express their individuality and creativity by mixing the worlds of fashion and streetwear. Corrupted Era offers modern cuts and original designs that reflect

current fashion trends with a style that is both elegant and casual. Visit corruptedera.com and follow on IG: @corrupted.era to see more.

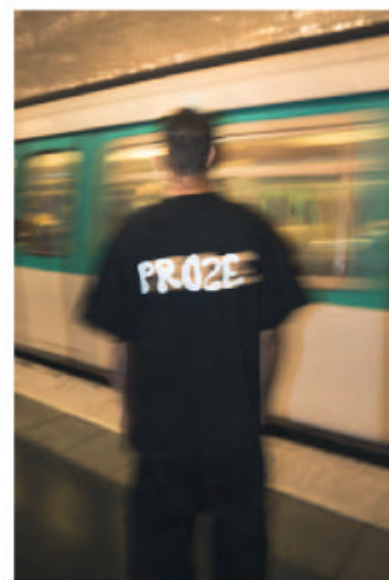
TAKEI



Based in New York, TAKEI is a lifestyle brand that adds a feel of luxury into everyday life. With the soft and delicate touch of its nightwear, daily wear and bedding, TAKEI hopes to bring you and your significant others mindful moments to release yourself after a bustling day. The brand also dedicates to be sustainable as all materials used are organic, such as silk and cashmere. Shop online at takeihome.com and follow @takeistore on IG.

SALTY DAGGER

A unisex recycled silver movement, now bringing you gold. Salty Dagger aims to take you all around the world and do what travelling was once meant to do, humble and inspire. Each collection is handcrafted slowly over a 9-12 month period using the 3000-year-old wax carving method, each piece with a story. Find yours. Visit saltydagger.com and follow @saltydagger on IG.

PROZE STUDIOS

Founded in 2020 by Thomas Pouget Roze, Proze Studios is a Parisian sustainable streetwear brand born from a desire to create timeless, durable pieces that are adapted to everyone's daily life. Inspired by streetwear dressing, Proze Studios pieces are mostly made in Portugal. Visit prozestudios.com and follow @prozestudios on IG.

erEvan

Since 2020, erEvan creates timeless pieces that are calling for travel. Flowing cuts and light colours are combined with high end materials such as Japanese denim to create a poetic and ethereal allure. A collection of fragrances will soon complete the brand's inspiring synaesthesia. Visit erevanofficiel.com and follow @erevanofficiel on IG.

**SENTIENT JEWELRY**

online at sentient-jewelry.com and follow @sentientjewelry on IG.

Sentient Jewelry is the new secret place to get unique designs with reasonable pricing. Sentient specialises in one-of-a-kind Baroque Pearls, alongside their timeless "O" and "1" chains, bracelets, anklets, and countless must-have pieces that elevate every look. Gift your love, and yourself

BLOODLINE

Bloodline is a premium active couture brand built on the premise that every individual has skills and strengths that are innately derived. The brand seeks to help unearth and exude your natural skills through complimentary luxury fabrics and bespoke details that help take you beyond just the gym to look and feel your best wherever you go, because it's in your blood. Visit bloodline.com to see more.

BOJANG

Bojang creates clothes that fit perfectly into everyday life and a comfortable look that is both qualitative and modern. The label is based in Vienna, but offers their products to the world. The brand's mission is to embody a versatile and modern wardrobe. Visit bojangclo.com and follow on IG @bojang.official

GQ's Lookbook

BUCCERONI



BUCCERONI is a menswear brand offering highly exclusive made-to-measure service, along with the most comfortable and stylish ready-to-wear garments for daily wardrobe. BUCCERONI's meticulous craftsmanship and finest materials infuse each unique piece with tradition, nature, and respect for humanity.

Book an appointment or shop online at bucceroni.com and follow @bucceroniofficial on IG.

LOVE FOR C/O®



Love For C/O® Greek mythology-series with design Poseidon, Zeus and the new Pegasos. Their stunning pieces are carefully

crafted by hand and made from the highest quality sterling silver. During the Autumn 2022 new designs will be released, produced in the spirit of silversmith Robin Sebastian Saint. Visit lovefor.co and follow @loveforco on IG.

MARCO DAL MASO



MARCO DAL MASO is an Italian jewellery brand, handcrafted in Italy for the modern MAN. MARCO DAL MASO uses 100% recycled silver and gold. Marco believes that the jewels we choose to connect with are sacred to our souls and should celebrate our individual identities. Visit marcodalmaso.com and follow @marcodalmaso_official on IG.

PURPLE HEARTS



Established in 2021, Purple Hearts tries to reflect the spirit of the times; using their designs combined with their own perspective of the fashion world in their products. Purple Hearts has announced its will release their first collection "LOVERS NIGHTMARE" in Fall/Winter 2022-2023. (Location: Steigenberger Frankfurt) Visit purplehearts.de and

follow @purplehearts.de on IG.

VENTO



Founded in 2020, VENTO is one of Germany's fastest growing streetwear brands. VENTO is for anyone trying to counteract social norms by doing their own thing on the path to become GREAT. This is VENTO.

Become a part of the journey at ventoclothing.com and follow @vento_de on IG.

MUSU



Launched in October 2021 by two siblings, MUSU creates unique frames that can be worn all year round and will stand the test of time. Each pair of MUSU is dreamt up in the heart of the French Riviera and handcrafted in Italy with the primary intention of adding a distinctive yet always elegant touch to any attire. Visit musubrand.com and follow @musuwhat on IG.

MEMORIES DONT DIE



This is MEMORIES DONT DIE also known as MDDSTUDIOS – your go-to for all the latest jewellery trends, no matter who you are, where you're from and what you're up to. Created by them, styled by you. Visit memoriesdontdie.de and follow @mddstudios on IG.

SANTA ANA



Santa Ana presents their premium, urban and unique clothing using highly functional and comfortable sportswear fabrics. As both a combination of contemporary streetwear and athletic style, their brand offers the ultimate metropolitan looks. Enjoy the quality and unique brand style online at santa-ana.co.uk and follow @santaanaathleticapparel on IG.

GEORGE BLACK



George BLACK, previously known as GEGE London, are a brand determined to create trousers that fit, feel and look great, they believe nothing matters more than fit. They have since created their everyday trousers, designed to balance work/life whilst keeping you comfortable and stylish, made with their unique Motion Flex Waistband that gives more comfort in movement. Passionate about giving back, the brand are donating their stock from last year to charity. See how they created the most advanced motion flex waistband at georgeblack.co.uk and follow @georgeblack.co.uk on IG.

Fashion Collection



KA BALLER HOODIE \$2395
KOLJAANNUSSEK.COM
IG: @KOLJAANNUSSEKOFFICIAL



KNITTED BEANIE
ANTHEM-FOREVER.COM
IG: @ANTHEMFOREVER



S1 GREEN TRACKSUIT SET
HANS-HENNES.COM
IG: @HANSHENNES.TTP



CURVE CREW T-SHIRT IN GRANITE
RULEOFTHEADS.COM
IG: @RULEOFTHEADS



GREEN CARGOS
RAGERTHELABEL
IG: @RAGERTHELABEL

SIRTILE SOCK BRAND
SIRTILE.COM
IG: @SIRTILESOCKS



SANTA ANA VEST \$50
LEGEROU.COM
IG: @BYLEGEROU



KEY TRUCKER £35
ARTEFACTSCLO.COM
IG: @ARTEFACTSCLO



KUST. BS 04/ BABY BLUE
KUST.COM
IG: @KUST.PREMISES



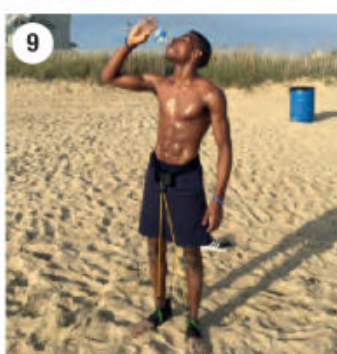
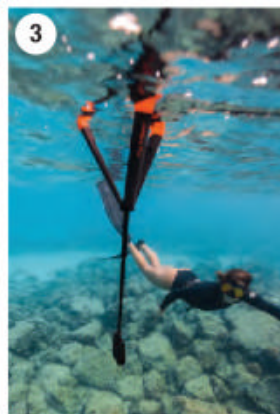
CUSTOM SUEDE SNEAKER-LONDON MODEL
HOCKERTY.UK
IG: @HOCKERTY.MEN



HOODIE
EXPRESSIO-CLOTHING.DE
IG: @EXPRESSIOPRINTS

1. KOLJA ANNUSSEK founded his namesake label with the aim to go beyond the average apparel and introduce not just any ordinary but couture-level streetwear brand. The "KA-Baller" Hoodie is designed based upon an original American football jersey and features a genuine python leather embroidery finish. **2.** Founded in 2021, **Anthem** is an American independent design label that practices in textile and visual media. The knitted beanie is a handmade piece created in collaboration with @baileyxgoldberg from his studio in New York. This and more objects are available now. **3. HANSHENNES** translated into English means "his and hers". Founded in 2020, the brand combines streetwear and modern wear with timeless and rough elements. Believing the quote 'Trust the Process', HANSHENNES is now a fluid brand that focuses on development from multiple perspectives, with the ideology from being a caterpillar to becoming a butterfly. **4.** Make getting dressed easy with **Rule of Threads'** premium streetwear apparel. Discover the range of colours, fits, and styles that are the perfect combination of comfort, softness and stretch. It's where streetwear meets versatility. **5. Rager the Label.** The eye-catching product from their Chapter 3 collection, Rager Cargos, taking your everyday wear to new heights. The favourable trait of streetwear is comfortability, constructed from blended fabrics of cotton and nylon, with the ability to withstand any winter weather, featuring large cargo pockets, with a large embroidered 'Rager' in old London across the back, for extra detail. An asset to any fashion enthusiast's wardrobe. **6.** Socks are essential when creating your daily outfit. With its timeless unisex style, knitted in high quality cotton, **SirTile®** – a Portuguese sock brand – has an ambition to translate the aesthetic of the Azulejos patterns into a useful piece of clothing. **7. Legerou's** Old Memories Collection presents the new 'Santa Ana' knitted sweater vest made of 100% heavy cotton. The brand created this new design by bringing memories back to life with a touch of style. Use promo code GQ15 and enjoy 15% off your first purchase (expires 27/02/23). Shop the collection at legerou.com and follow @bylegerou on IG. **8. Artefacts** is collaboration between the past and the present; bringing new life to past ideas and concepts. Through physical assets, the brand provides discoverers of artefacts with a piece of culture/art sadly forgotten or currently undiscovered. Artefacts lasts forever. **9.** An exceptional hybrid of boxer and running shorts inspired by 70's classic sport design by **KUST.** Mid-rise shape and split at the side to enable freedom of leg movement with anti-static and breathable features designed to keep you feeling fresh. Handmade in Poland from a luxurious viscose silk; the finest sustainable fabric cellulose fibre, perfect for any activity. Reaching 55 mm wide with an luxuriously soft elastic waistband featuring their logo. **10.** Reflecting a sophisticated yet casual look, the new **Hockerty** sneaker, 100% made to order shoes embraces a sense of modern touch on classic themes. The brand-new line is a perfect result of the brand's ethical craftsmanship story through quality, precision and modernism. The multitude of models, colours and the Italian leather is what Hockerty stands for; individual empowerment and confidence. Visit their website to learn more. **11. EXPRESSIO** is a young German streetwear brand known for their handmade and expressive looks. They are characterised by the combination of self-made screen prints and hand sewn details. Their StartUp Expressio Prints are used to create unique and adventurous pieces, handmade by only four hands. It is their desire to inspire. They want you to expressio'r self.

Technically Speaking



1. Could an e-bike change your life? Inspired by motorcycle design, **NewGen** builds its 345 electric bikes in Somerset, sourcing the highest quality components from the UK and beyond. Wave goodbye to the rat-run blues: no traffic jams, no parking issues, no strikes, just a quick, comfortable ride. Even better, you don't need a driving licence or insurance. Prices start at £1,990 or £83/month. Switch to electric now and enter a new generation of travel. Visit newgenbikes.com and follow [@newgen_bikes](https://www.instagram.com/newgen_bikes) on IG.

2. Created for the love of sneakers and founded in Australia, **Kicks Kase** provide premium quality duffel bags with a convenient system of organising and a safe way of preserving shoes, clothes and belongings during travel, sports and gym. Their bags come in several colours, materials and prints and fit up to 4 pairs of US size 14 men's shoes. Visit kickskase.com and follow [@kickskase](https://www.instagram.com/kickskase) on IG.

3. **Nu Bear.** The Nu Grip 4in1 is the world's first floating tripod. The ultimate travel accessory for your GoPro, DJI or smartphone needs. High quality and lightweight, the Nu Grip 4in1 is a compact solution for your travels. Convert it from a camera grip to a stable tripod in seconds, extend it to a 22 inch pole and drop it in the water as a float. Whatever your adventure, the Nu Grip will be there for you. Visit nu-bear.com and follow [@nu_bear](https://www.instagram.com/nu_bear) on IG.

4. If you're into making pizza and need a hand with perfecting your dough, get these! Designed to fix the problem of dough balls sticking together, **Babadoh** silicone containers individually hug your balls as they prove. Flexible to easily release the dough, holding the tight shape and air created during resting, resulting in pizza to rival the best pizza chefs out there. Visit babadoh.com and follow [@babadoh](https://www.instagram.com/babadoh) on IG.

5. Draumr by Norwegian outdoor brand, **Amok Equipment**, is a hammock for those who like to sleep comfortably and wake up feeling refreshed. With its innovative and versatile design allowing you to lie flat or in a seated, 'beer mode' position, you can relax and take in the panoramic views of your natural surroundings. Visit [amoequipment.com](https://amoquipment.com) and follow [@amoequipment](https://www.instagram.com/amoequipment) on IG.

6. **Orb Bike's** Zeppo is made for the city but excels everywhere – robust and low maintenance without compromising on weight. Shimano hub gears give a phenomenal 307% range, Gates belt-drive means no chain, and no oil necessary! Integrated anti-theft lights and mudguards finish the package for a perfect do-anything bike. £1,249.99 orb.bike/gg

7. **BMX DNA.REMIXED.ELECTRIFIED.** Since 2019, **Eins bike** has aimed to build the best e-bike possible. They wanted to create an eco-friendly e-bike that also looks stunning, keeping sustainability in mind during the whole development process. They achieved this without compromising on design, reducing power or making it less fun in any way. Visit eins.bike and follow [@eins.bike](https://www.instagram.com/eins.bike) on IG.

8. The **Bentwood Vertical 63** delivers a unique taste and design experience. The Swiss brand is as popular at barista competitions as it is with coffee loving home baristas, both for espresso and filter coffee. The stepless grind adjustment guides users intuitively to the perfect grind setting, not wasting coffee to dial in and consistently delivering the desired output. Visit bentwoodcoffee.ch and follow [@bentwoodcoffee](https://www.instagram.com/bentwoodcoffee) on IG.

9. The most innovative, effective and versatile functional resistance training system to arrive in years, **WearBands** is quickly becoming an essential piece of training kit for university athletic programs, sports academies, coaches and athletes worldwide, as well as everyday fitness consumers, who are using WearBands to dramatically increase the results of their favourite workouts. WearBands was born from the idea that the resistance equipment you use should not dictate what you can and cannot do with it, and that truly functional resistance should allow the body to move freely at any speed. Do what you want, when you want and where you want and get fitter than ever. Visit wearbands.com and follow [@wearbands](https://www.instagram.com/wearbands) on IG.

10. Keeping ski-bums warm. Rooted in eastern Canada and known for their signature fleece shorts, **Betterbutter**, an eco-friendly brand, does their part ensuring our winters stay bountiful. Utilising materials such as organic Cotton, recycled water bottles, and their signature Guilt-Free Acrylic, you're not buying, but investing in a long-term garment. Visit betterbutterclothing.com and follow [@betterbutterclothing](https://www.instagram.com/betterbutterclothing) on IG.

11. The new **Maeving RM1** electric motorcycle features removable batteries you can charge from any plug socket and has been designed and made in Coventry: the heart of UK motorcycle heritage. Available in single-battery (£4995) or dual-battery (£5990) configurations for 40 or 80 miles of range respectively, the 45mph-capable RM1 has been engineered to make urban travel a joy. Visit maeving.com and follow on IG: [@maevingelectricmotorcycles](https://www.instagram.com/maevingelectricmotorcycles)

12. **Vitti Cycling** crafts cycling apparel reflecting what you feel and see from the bike. Handmade in Italy, the bespoke feel of their apparel shows a respect for cycling heritage with a firmly modern design aesthetic. Their ethos is, "Non Dimenticare Chi Sei", "Don't forget who you are", don't forget your joy, love for the road, the freedom it brings and the fire that burned in your 14 year old heart. Visit vitticycling.cc and follow [@vitticycling](https://www.instagram.com/vitticycling) on IG.

13. **HANKEN.** Your timeless movement pieces. The Tech Collection is committed to high quality performance products, sustainably made in Portugal with recycled materials. Lightweight and breathable fabrics, with great moisture management, and functional pockets for all your gear. Tested by their community of sportsmen. Shop at hankenactive.com and follow [@hankenactive](https://www.instagram.com/hankenactive) on IG.

Bachelor Pad

1. Shannon Studios. Original art created in Bondi Beach, Australia by Artist Shannon Parsons. Shannon uses textured mediums to create patterns, that evolve into a piece embodying mystery and movement, each finishing as a bold 3D statement of work. Influenced by the latest fashion trends, each piece is finished with a bold colour. Discover more on IG [@shannon.studio](#)

2. Contemporary New York-based painter **MELISSA SCHAIKER** creates figurative/surrealist works from her studio in Tribeca. Seen here is her recent mixed-media painting titled 'Blight', created for a Street Art Exhibition at Hudson Yards Gallery. Learn more about her work at [mschainerfineart.com](#) and follow [@mschainerfineart](#) on IG.

3. Israeli artist **Jordana Klein**'s style can only be defined as "colour". Pictured is 'Tree of Life', a vibrant depiction of nature presented in a kaleidoscope of shades. It is both thought provoking and hypnotising. Jordana Klein has been painting for over thirty years, and has exhibited her work across the world. Visit [jordanaklein.com](#) to see more.

4. Bankoleart – UK based Artist, **Danladi Kole Bako** is a multidimensional and multidisciplinary artist, one of the finest urban artists to emerge from Africa, with a rare mix of storytelling and visual illusion. Bankoleart uses skilful integration of styles and techniques to create works that explore many concerns from environmental conservation, culture, and the preservation of native heritage and ecology. Visit [bankoleart.com](#) and follow on IG: [@bankoleart](#)

5. **Lo Hennessey** is a Massachusetts-based artist and Doctor of Physical Therapy. She specialises in oil, acrylic, and watercolour paintings inspired by her education, travels, and imagination. Her work is characterised by vibrant colours, loud vision, and anatomical distortion. Learn more at [lohennyart.com](#) and [@lohennessey](#) on IG.

6. **Pullman Editions** designs striking original limited-edition posters that capture the enduring appeal of Art Deco. Their posters feature winter sports, glamorous resorts around the world, and historic automobiles. Over 100 designs available at £420 each. Call **020 7730 0547** or view and buy online at [pullmaneditions.com](#)

7. FAITH KU DESIGNS and creates unique one-of-a-kind nature-inspired ceramic artworks. Her work draws inspiration from the intricate structures of botanical and fungal life and the cycles of regeneration in nature. She makes wall installation and table top pieces. To view her work or for inquiries, visit [faithcoceramics.com](#) and follow [@faithandcoceramics](#) on IG.

8. **Hesho Serray** is a Sweden-based artist with a love for textures found in nature. Hesho translates earth's beauty into her artwork, focusing on reflecting nature's different forms, colours, energies and exciting expressions. Walking in nature lets her capture hidden details, where the symphony of life occurs, discovering the playfulness of light and shadow and translating this directly into her artwork. Creativity is part of her soul's journey! Featured is her piece "Into the Forest". Visit: [heshoserray.com](#) and follow on IG: [@heshoserray](#)

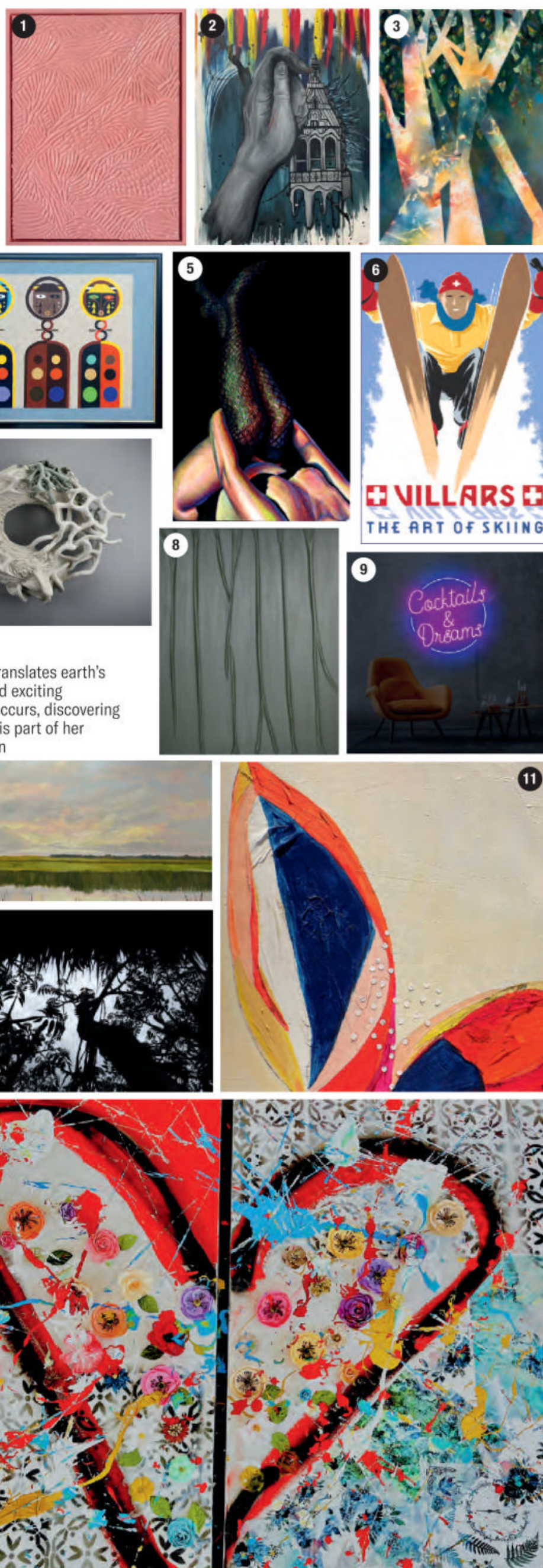
9. **Neon Daddy** is a small business that creates high-quality custom neon signs at an affordable price in the UK. At Neon Daddy, the team believes that every customer deserves products that reflect their individual style and personality, so they strive to make sure each custom neon sign looks great in its own unique way! Visit [neondaddy.co.uk](#) and follow [neondaddy.co.uk](#) on IG.

10. **Megan Spillars** is an American artist and oil painter based in Raleigh, North Carolina. Her impressionist style features calming landscapes as well as bold florals and figurative work. She draws inspiration from nature and through observations of the simple yet beautiful moments in life. Her work can be found at [meganspillars.com](#) and follow [@meganspillarsart](#) on IG.

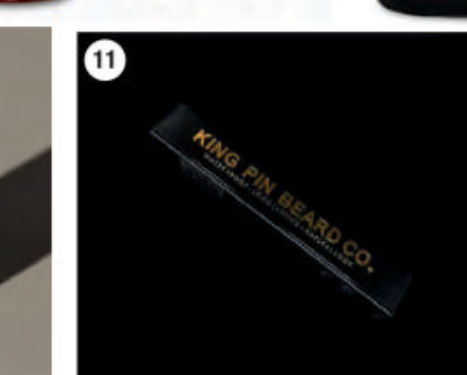
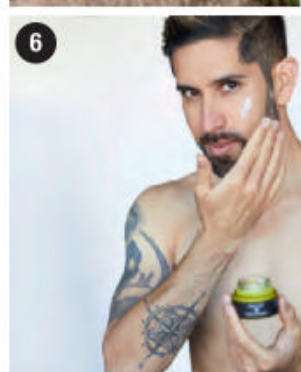
11. Using abstract and mixed media techniques, **GRACEIN**'s work is inspired by her personal experiences and the people who have left a strong impression on her life. She has been featured in solo and group exhibitions, including Rail Station Gallery in Plano, Texas; the Las Laguna Gallery in Laguna Beach, California; and The Other Art Fair, sponsored by Saatchi Art. In addition, her work is in numerous private collections throughout the United States. Visit [graceinmcginnis.com](#) email [hello@graceinco.com](#) and follow [@graceinco](#) on IG.

12. **Pia Kintrup** is showcasing her 'the nonexistent areas are of particular interest' open series. The theme of her series is the impact of borders and ultimate control of information in places that creates a parallel world. These scenerios are artificial settings and constructions which create conflicts within our everyday life. The idea is to create a photographic, mixed media installation that brings a new perspective about universal themes such as control, staging, surveillance, and value. She is represented by Galerie Ricarda Fox. Visit [piakintrup.com](#) and follow on IG [@piakintrup](#)

13. **STEPHANIE DILLON** is a Minneapolis based artist who uses salvaged and reclaimed canvases as a base for her vibrant and colourful works. Stephanie has developed a bold style while utilising many mediums: from found objects and traditional painting to digital and crypto art, she uses these tools to express her pain, joy, and grief while highlighting her profound gratitude for life. She celebrates beauty in the unexpected and helping bring that joy to others through her work and through collaborating with other artists. Her feeling is that whenever something is thrown out, she can potentially turn it into something beautiful again. Art is everywhere. Pictured is "Paper Flowers on Broken Heart", an acrylic and aerosol painting on canvas with collaged vintage elements. For more information on Stephanie and her collaborations, visit [StephanieDillonArt.com](#) or follow [@stephaniedillonart](#) on IG.



Grooming Marvellous



1. FORAH is a raw, natural and powerful sunscreen and skincare brand born by vast mountains, rich temperate rainforests and expanses of rugged land bound by deep, sometimes unruly seas. It's from these natural spaces that FORAH draws much of its inspiration. All of their products are free from harsh chemicals, parabens, synthetic fragrances, phthalates, dyes, micro-plastics, petrochemicals and are sustainably packaged. Visit fforahh.com and follow [@fforahh](https://www.instagram.com/fforahh) on IG.

2. Credence's shampoo is tailored for men by UK hair experts so you can look, feel and smell your best. Available in 3 captivating scents with premium real essences and distinctive masculine notes. Including Nature Bolster™, a blend of plant-based cleansers, British hops, organic oats and wheat protein. Scents with distinction to leave a confident and lasting impression. Visit credencehair.com and follow [@credence.hair](https://www.instagram.com/credence.hair) on IG.

3. "Someone who is free to act, speak and think without limits." **FREEDOM**, a fresh and powerful yellow nail ink from the Limitless Collection by **BUG for Men**. Their rich yellow nail polish for men has been named **FREEDOM**, inspired by the positivity and power that comes from the freedom to act, speak and think without limits; to be individualistic with an independent viewpoint. Visit bugformen.com and follow [@bugformen](https://www.instagram.com/bugformen) on IG.

4. Dapper Guru was created for the modern male: a man on the go who wants to look great while conquering the world. Their products are crafted with natural and sustainable ingredients. Their commitment is to create the products that you need so that you can look and feel great while taking on the world. Visit thedapperguru.com and follow [@dapperguru](https://www.instagram.com/dapperguru) on IG.

5. Good things do come in small packages. If you're heading off on your travels, then **GRAHAM HILL COSMETICS** have your perfect companions. **BRICKYARD Superfresh Shampoo**, **ABBEY Revitalising Body Wash** and **ARNAGE Moisturising Face and Beard Balm** in handy 100ml bottles; maximum product for you and airline friendly. Available individually or as a set in their signature, high-quality canvas bag. Travel in style and be perfectly groomed for business or pleasure. Paraben free and 100% Vegan. Visit the official UK website at grahamhillcosmetics.com and follow [@grahamhillcosmetics](https://www.instagram.com/grahamhillcosmetics) on IG.

6. Green Chemistry selects each ingredient from top rated natural sources while utilising clinical ingredients such as retinol and stem cells, with the aim to create the most effective formulations with a team of chemists, ayurvedic practitioners, dermatologists, and skincare experts. All sales contribute to bee conservation. Visit greenchemistryinc.com and follow [@greenchemistryskincare](https://www.instagram.com/greenchemistryskincare) on IG.

7. TOMORROW has designed a 4 step skin health system that empowers men to establish a proper skin hygiene protocol whilst transforming the monotonous routine of skincare into a meditative experience. The Essentials System helps men eliminate poor skin hygiene as the major cause of acne, breakouts, wrinkles, and dark bags under the eyes. The products are formulated in Melbourne, Australia, and aims to leave your skin looking clean, refreshed, and glowing. Shop at tomorrowskincare.com and follow [@tomorrowskincare](https://www.instagram.com/tomorrowskincare) on IG.

8. Mens Skins. Ethical, vegan and natural skincare. Inclusive of all men's skin, whatever the colour or type. They pride themselves in using natural ingredients, no nasty chemicals or dyes and no fragrance in any of their products. They offer three entry skincare essentials and a trio set. Make the change today and cherish the skin you're in. Visit mensskins.com and follow [@mensskins](https://www.instagram.com/mensskins) on IG.

9. Marlou is a perfume brand dedicated to creating scents using beautiful raw materials. Each of their fragrances is a daring project around body odours, with notes described as animal and creating stunning olfactory personalities. **Corpalium**, their latest release, is a work around the earthy facets of iris root with an equine sensuality, tobacco and leathery notes. Visit marlou.paris and follow [@marlou.paris](https://www.instagram.com/marlou.paris) on IG.

10. Our largest organ, our skin, covers roughly 2 square metres – a fun fact which gives this natural Italian skincare brand its name. **2SQM Serum** is an intensive treatment, including ingredients such as saffron, hyaluronic acid and aloe vera. The product aims to create the appearance of moisturised and soothed skin. Visit 2sqm.it and follow [@2sqmskincare](https://www.instagram.com/2sqmskincare) on IG.

11. Since 2021, **KingPin Beard Co.** has made it their official mission to create an all-inclusive, sustainable brand that brings luxury and convenience into your daily grooming routine. They use unique technology to achieve barber-level grooming products. Use code **GQ15** for 15% off (expires 27/02/23) at kingpinbeardco.com and follow [@kingpinbeardco](https://www.instagram.com/kingpinbeardco) on IG.

12. Ani Biome is the first in the world to offer Vitality as a Service membership model. They measure biopsychological data through their Habit app and calibrate it with biometric data from blood and stool sequencing. Based on the results, they personalise monthly gut health plans and predict the effect of their proprietary fermented nutraceutical interventions. Visit anibiome.ai to explore a life of vitality and follow [@anibiome](https://www.instagram.com/anibiome) on IG.

13. Men are Ment to take care of themselves. That's why **Ment's** premium skincare has been designed specifically for men, using the most effective all-natural Australian ingredients. Their simple Clean and Hydrate Set aims to help leave your skin feeling refreshed and ultra-hydrated. Visit mentskincare.com or follow on IG: [@ment.skin](https://www.instagram.com/ment.skin)



14. **HIZ Body** provides a hassle-free system of 4 multitasking easy-to-use products. The Hiz range is enriched with natural and organic ingredients containing amino acids and vitamins. Suitable for sensitive, oily or combo skin, customers frequently report their skin "looking and feeling the best it has in years". Visit hizbody.com.au and follow [@hizbody](https://www.instagram.com/hizbody) on IG.



15. The Carnal Blends collection by **INITIO Parfums Privés** is made up of four uncompromising fragrances, both rich in hedione, a compound that brings great airiness and light to a composition. The collection dares to engage with fantasy-fuelling ingredients, carnal notes, committed, powerful and distinctive couplings, and celebrates transgressive fragrance compositions with the power to awaken pleasure, to stir physical attraction. Explore at uk.initioparfums.com and follow [@initioparfumsprives](https://www.instagram.com/initioparfumsprives) on IG.

16. **Azman Perfumes**, the house of extraordinary Oud-based scents, focuses on creating unique Oud scents with creative concepts and precious lavish formulas made by award-winning perfumers from around the world. Azman simply stands for grandiose Oud. Visit azmanperfumes.com and follow [@azman_perfumes](https://www.instagram.com/azman_perfumes) on IG.

17. Say hello to healthier feeling hair from award-winning professional haircare brand **FFØR**. From shampoos and conditioners to a sensual treatment range offering a solution for every hair related stress, FFØR's 100% vegan, cruelty and sulphate free products aim to cleanse your hair, leave you with a softer feeling hair and scalp and deliver amazing professional results at home. Visit fforhair.com and follow [@fforhair](https://www.instagram.com/fforhair) on IG.

18. Indonesian-inspired, Korean-made: **Saé'kin** is a genderless skincare brand specialising in multi-functional products. Better Than Sunscreen feels weightless upon application, aiming to leave an invisible, matte finish and provides SPF50 PA++++ triple-protection against UVA/UVB/HEV exposure. Including zinc oxide, madecassic acid, and niacinamide. Discover more at saekincare.com and follow [@saekinofficial](https://www.instagram.com/saekinofficial) on IG.

19. **Gunkii™** luxury tongue cleaner stops bad breath in its tracks! Every gunkii™ is engineered to meet the strictest arch geometry, pliability and compliance tolerance. Gunkii™ is reusable, recyclable and individually CNC milled from a single block of food-safe aluminium to ensure your tongue is taken care of. Shop at gunkii.com and follow [@gunkii_tonguescraper](https://www.instagram.com/gunkii_tonguescraper) on IG.

20. **Monks** is an inclusive brand. Their luxurious fragrance blends and gentle yet effective formulas are created for one and for all, just as nature intended. Founded in 2022 in Los Angeles, Monks was born from a desire for high quality, all natural, body care products that offer the olfactory experience of fine fragrance. Visit monks.world and follow [@monks](https://www.instagram.com/monks) on IG.

21. **Dapper Yankee** provides premium quality small-batch natural soaps, deodorants, and personal care products for men looking to experience something better. Made in the USA, their soaps aim to produce a rich lather, leaving your skin feeling nourished with moisture. Available in a variety of invigorating scents to suit every type of man, from the American cowboy to the urban dweller. Visit dapperyankee.com and follow [@dapper_yankee](https://www.instagram.com/dapper_yankee) on IG.

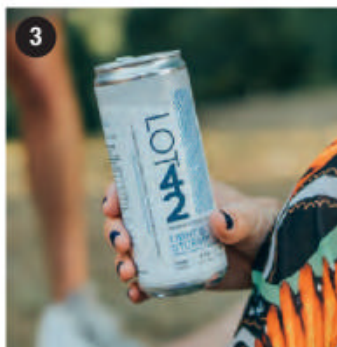
22. Born in London, **SKINCHOICE** is rooted in a firm belief that skincare should be clean, effective, and accessible to all, without sacrificing quality. Their Classic Nose Patch is a painless hydrocolloid pore patch that aims to absorb excess oil and impurities and minimise the appearance of blackheads. Visit skinchoice.com and follow [@skinchoice](https://www.instagram.com/skinchoice) on IG.

23. The **Dandymen Collection** is a barber-built line comprised of high-quality, user-friendly styling products. Made in the USA with ingredients that promote hair and scalp health, reach for their Sea Salt Spray and Grooming Clay to create a look that holds like something, but feels like nothing. Visit dandymen.com and follow [@dandymencollection](https://www.instagram.com/dandymencollection) on IG.

24. **Wellman Gummies** provide comprehensive nutritional support for the man who wants it all. Each delicious, vegan, natural orange flavour gummy is packed with 22 nutrients to help maintain overall health, including vitamins B6, B12 and copper which contribute to normal energy release, as well as pantothenic acid, Siberian Ginseng and Coenzyme Q10. Wellman chewable Gummies are ideal for those who don't like swallowing tablets. To find out more visit wellman.co.uk RRP £15.95.



GQ's Hamper



1. Hard Lines believe that great coffee should be both delicious, accessible and ready to be enjoyed at the click of a button. Their House Party Nespresso pods are sweet, balanced and well-rounded, with notes of milk chocolate and dried fruits. A versatile coffee to be enjoyed all day everyday! Explore at hard-lines.co.uk and follow [@hardlinescoffee](https://www.instagram.com/hardlinescoffee) on IG.

2. Mándolin Kombucha are focused on producing and distributing a kombucha full of life, benefits and a delicious flavour, whilst caring for the planet and society. They seek to be an environmentally responsible company, using 100% natural ingredients of the highest quality, with first-class machinery to guarantee the safety of their kombucha.

Visit mandolinkombucha.com and follow [@mandolinkombucha](https://www.instagram.com/mandolinkombucha) on IG.

3. Based on a true story of freedom, opportunity and optimism, **Lot 42** produce delicious low-calorie and low-abv cocktails in a can. As a gay couple, founders Chris & Dale are community-first with an ambition to create positive, open-minded spaces, where people can get together. Spaces which promote individuality and encourage everyone to be their true selves, free of judgement. Explore at lot-42.com and follow [@drinklot42](https://www.instagram.com/drinklot42) on IG.

4. Chaiboy is a progressive tea studio looking to reshape tea's identity. They take a brand-new approach to tea through the lens of fashion, art, and culture. By placing quality and design at the core of their approach, Chaiboy pushes boundaries to transform the way tea is perceived. Their premium tea blends are sold in their signature matte black glass containers. Visit wearechaiboy.com and follow [@wearechaiboy](https://www.instagram.com/wearechaiboy) on IG.

5. Greenhouse Gin. Unique blooms from the Greenhouse bring soft juniper berries dancing with cardamom, coriander, and Sicilian Bergamot to create a vibrant flavour that goes beyond the standard gin spirit. This classic take on a London Dry Gin is the perfect sipping gin that also works great in cocktails. Visit greenhousespirits.com and follow [@greenhousegin](https://www.instagram.com/greenhousegin) on IG.

6. Crossover Blendery create unique small-batch beers which age for extended periods. They work directly with British farmers to source the best ingredients for their beer. Summer song 2022 is a blend of 1 and 2-year-old golden ales which spontaneously fermented and matured in oak barrels. The beer was refermented on British raspberries and sour cherries, finished in freshly emptied whisky barrels with Madagascan vanilla. Visit crossoverblendery.co.uk and follow [@crossoverblendery](https://www.instagram.com/crossoverblendery) on IG.

7. Tito's Handmade Vodka is America's Original Craft Vodka, distilled and bottled in Austin, Texas. This winter, shake up a decadent after-dinner drink that adds a jolt of bold espresso and a little sweetness to your smooth Tito's. Just brew your strongest espresso, shake it up with a little ice and a splash of Tito's, then strain into a martini glass. Top it with a few espresso beans and enjoy! For more cocktail ideas, visit TitosVodka.com and follow [@titosvodka](https://www.instagram.com/titosvodka) on IG.

8. Talonmore Non-Alcoholic Spirit is brewed instead of distilled to maintain maximum flavour. Using natural ingredients and the pleasant burn from ginger, Talonmore is the perfect alcohol alternative to dark spirits. Drink neat, with a mixer, in a non-alcoholic old fashioned or mojito. Visit talonmoredrinks.com and follow [@talonmoredrinks](https://www.instagram.com/talonmoredrinks) on IG.

9. Tracing the Mainline Railway between London and Penzance, **Mainline Spirit Co** create small-batch gin and vodka tied to the land where it is produced. Flavoured with botanicals grown close to the stills, with an emphasis on local growers, their handcrafted spirits are the product of sustainable processes. Find them at mainlinespirits.com and follow [@mainline_spirits](https://www.instagram.com/mainline_spirits) on IG.

10. Created by a Welsh master distiller, with 100% real ingredients, **Devil's Bridge Rum** is a spiced rum aged for up to 9 years. Botanical and complex, it boasts nostalgic flavours of Gleneggetie black tea for depth, bara brith for sweetness and Shirgar butter for

smoothness (all local produce to South Wales). Multi-award-winning. Visit devilsbridgerum.com and follow [@devilsbridgerum](https://www.instagram.com/devilsbridgerum) on IG.

11. Uhuru Spirits. Imagine this... heat, crashing waves, calypso beats, tropical fruits and buttery toffee flavours on your tongue. Uhuru's latest release, XO Caribbean Golden Rum, can get you close. Those Caribbean flavours, with oaky notes and a warm lingering finish all in one sip. 10% of all net sales are donated to leading conservation charity Tusk. Visit uhuruspirits.co.uk and follow [@uhuruspirits](https://www.instagram.com/uhuruspirits) on IG.

12. Douglas Laing's Scallywag is a feisty Fox Terrier that's bursting with flavour. This latest Winter limited edition is offered at a Natural Cask Strength of 54% and is 100% Sherry Cask matured. An explosion of rich, dark fruits, chocolate and spice, it's the ultimate winter warmer. Visit douglaslaing.com and follow [@scallywagwhisky](https://www.instagram.com/scallywagwhisky) on IG.

13. Root Elixirs create sparkling mixers to elevate your at-home craft cocktail experience. Each bottle allows you to create top-shelf cocktails that you'd otherwise find in your favourite craft bar. They brew in small batches, designing fresh, whole-ingredient, sparkling cocktail mixers for those who want quality but are hard-pressed for time, helping you to maintain that high-class energy in the comfort of your home. Visit rootelixirs.com and follow [@root_elixirs](https://www.instagram.com/root_elixirs) on IG.

14. The start of the year is traditionally the time where people like to lighten up a little on their choice of drinks. Drink less but better quality is a good motto! If you're looking for something different, why not try the refreshing taste of this Barrel Reserve Arran Single Malt from the idyllic Isle of Arran off the west-coast of Scotland? This Single Malt has fresh notes of citrus and vanilla with hints of coconut. It is ideal on its own or mixed with some soda and fresh mint for a longer drink. The beautiful **Isle of Arran** is your next whisky destination with two stunning distilleries to visit. Now is a great time to search this island gem online and make plans for a Scottish adventure this Spring. Whilst you're making your plans, the full range of Arran Single Malt Whiskies including this delicious Barrel Reserve expression are available from specialist whisky shops and from arranwhisky.com Search Arran Single Malt online follow [@arranwhiskyofficial](https://www.instagram.com/arranwhiskyofficial) on IG.

15. Introducing **Mahala Botanical**, an award winning alcohol-free spirit from South Africa. This premium craft spirit is free from alcohol, sugar, colourants and artificial flavours, perfect for those seeking a healthy alternative to alcohol without compromising on taste or quality! Designed to be mixed with a premium tonic, ginger ale or sparkling water with aromas of clove and cardamom and subtle floral and citrus notes. Visit mahalabotanical.com and follow [@mahalabotanical](https://www.instagram.com/mahalabotanical) on IG.

16. JavaMur Caribbean Rums are all-natural and inspired by their passion for Caribbean culture, rum, and coffee. Born from coffee based cocktails made in Cruz Bay, St John, their JavaMur hand crafted collection of Caribbean Rums are infused with their favourite coffee blends and other natural flavours. Visit javarum.co and follow [@javarumco](https://www.instagram.com/javarumco) on IG.

17. The Iconic FMC by **Ken Forrester Wines**. Richly textured with layers of dried apricot, vanilla, honey and almond. Enjoy with special friends as an exciting aperitif or with spiced dishes, even mild seafood or shellfish curries. The ageing potential of this wine is legendary. Try to keep it for 20 years! Browse kenforresterwines.com and follow [@kenforresterwineyards](https://www.instagram.com/kenforresterwineyards) on IG.

18. Waterbomb makes a range of drinks that are good for you and good for the planet. Refresh and revitalise your body with their delicious watermelon drink which is a part of their "What A Juice" range. It contains 100% all-natural watermelon with added vitamin D for an immunity boost. Waterbomb is proud to be B Corp certified, carbon-negative and they use 100% recycled bottles. Available in Sainsbury's. Visit waterbomb.com and follow [@waterbomb.drinks](https://www.instagram.com/waterbomb.drinks) on IG.

19. OTC Beverages is a non-alcoholic drinks brand. A business idea of a city veteran, it has been shortlisted for industry accolades including the Great British Food Awards 2020, 2021 and 2022, awarded 'Best Traditional Caribbean Drink' Lux Life Magazine 2021/2022, awarded multiple awards with South East Media and Food Matters in 2022 and 2023. OTC participated in the London Press Event Rolls Royce Exec Club for the Queens Platinum Jubilee Celebrations. Place your order at otcbeverages.com

20. In 1846, in the foothills of the Italian Alps, Giuseppe Menabrea found the perfect location and natural resources to build his brewery. To this day you'll find his award winning **Menabrea** Bionda Birra being brewed at the same site in Biella, by the same family using the same ingredients, passion and care. Visit menabrea.co.uk

21. MayaJules is an award-winning premium Mezcal inspired by the authentic sensual being of the Goddess of Agave Mayahuel. Powerful and refined, MayaJules is a category defining spirit devoted to celebrating the feminine divine. Each hand labelled and numbered bottle comes in a signature gold accented black gift box and features a distinctive closure bearing the mark of MayaJules, accompanied with a cactus leather friendship bracelet handmade by local artisans. Purchase directly from mayajules.com and follow [@drinkmayajules](https://www.instagram.com/drinkmayajules) on IG.

22. Two brothers on a mission to smash down the walls of wine. No jargon and no junk, Nouveau Wine is for the curious. Powered by taste, **Nouveau** makes great wine more accessible. This is wine 2.0. Welcome to a new sip. Visit nouveauwine.co and follow [@nouveauwineco](https://www.instagram.com/nouveauwineco)



Be Mine



1. Latham & Neve – known for their stunning contemporary hand-made British jewellery since 1997. Featured is the unique Ripple Bangle in beaten silver with 18ct gold. Ballroom bangles, awesome earrings, ravishing rings and much much more. To buy online, stockists or discover the most perfect gift, visit lathamandneve.co.uk and follow [@lathamneve](https://www.instagram.com/lathamneve) on IG.

2. ZOE HOOP. The 'Fear Not' hoops are a contemporary meaningful pair of hoops with a high quality solid finish. Designed to remind you not to be afraid. Crafted by artisans in developing countries with good working conditions. Visit zoehoopjewelry.com and follow [@zoehoopjewelry](https://www.instagram.com/zoehoopjewelry) on IG.

3. Designer, gemologist and owner of **JEANNE LAUMIER**, Giulia Rastello, creates stunning bespoke and unique high-end jewellery. She places immense attention on the details of her pieces using a variety of different materials including gold, titanium and platinum alongside diamonds, coloured gemstones and pearls. All her jewellery pieces are made in Italy. To view this piece and more visit jeannelaumier.com and follow [@jeanne_laumier](https://www.instagram.com/jeanne_laumier) on IG.

4. Studio VVGG is a creative house based in Brooklyn, NY specialising in one-of-a-kind, bespoke, and handmade pieces. All metals and materials used are nickel-free, hypoallergenic, and sustainably sourced from artisans all over the globe. No two items are alike! Shop online at studiovvgg.com and follow along on IG and Tiktok [@studio.vvgg](https://www.instagram.com/studio.vvgg)

5. The Finishing Piece is a fashion accessories brand which is most known for their statement jewellery. A wide range of unique and eye catching accessories for all seasons which will complete your outfits. Whatever your style, The Finishing Piece have the perfect item for you. To explore more jewellery and accessories visit thefinishingpiece.com and follow [@the.finishing.piece](https://www.instagram.com/the.finishing.piece) on IG.

6. Spinelli Kilcollin is a luxury jewellery brand founded by husband and wife duo Yves Spinelli and Dwyer Kilcollin. Handcrafted in Los Angeles, Spinelli Kilcollin's jewellery is made by local artisans using ethically sourced materials. Their iconic linked rings are designed with mixed metals and lustrous pavé-set diamonds offering different variations in their signature silhouettes. Visit spinellikilcollin.com and [@spinellikilcollin](https://www.instagram.com/spinellikilcollin) on IG.

7. Toronto brand **SHOP JUJU** is a luxury pet boutique with a curated range of products including beds, toys, treats, walking accessories, and more for dogs and cats. As an extension of their grooming salon, Juju Grooms, they strive to provide the best products to help enrich the lives of your pets. Follow [@shopjuju](https://www.instagram.com/shopjuju) on IG and visit shopjuju.ca for more.

8. Victori creates ethical and sustainable jewellery out of recycled and fairmined precious metals and lab-grown gemstones in Los Angeles. Inspired by the symbolism of Victorian jewellery, Victori's pieces are designed to be an emotional, symbolic keepsake and a luxury outfit accent. Discover more at victorijewelry.com and follow [@victorijewelry](https://www.instagram.com/victorijewelry) on IG.

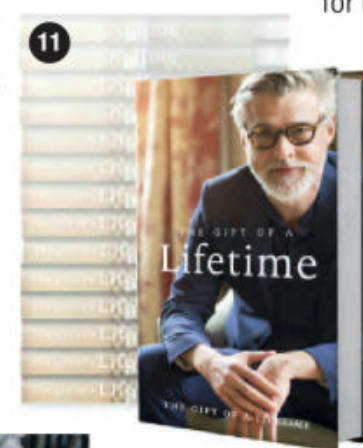
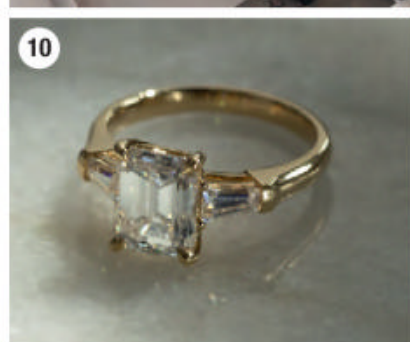
9. This high-performance **Varenti Beauty** Pro Blending Brush is the key to a smooth looking makeup application. It can do it all, working well with your blush and bronzer too. It picks up the right amount of makeup each time and leaves make up looking seamlessly blended. This brush is made for those who want a flawless feeling application. Visit varentibeauty.com and follow [@varentibeauty](https://www.instagram.com/varentibeauty) on IG.

10. Cullen Jewellery celebrates life's cherished moments, conscientiously. Cullen Jewellery is one of the leading ethical brands for premium lab-grown diamond and moissanite engagement rings in Australia. The elegant, bespoke creations designed by Cullen Jewellery are synonymous with exceptional craftsmanship, empowering couples to embody their values for generations to come. Visit cullenjewellery.com and follow [@cullenjewellery](https://www.instagram.com/cullenjewellery) on IG.

11. Imagine, your own autobiography in just 6 months or the perfect gift for a family member or loved one. **Lifebook's** interviewers and professional writers make it so easy, enjoyable and a richly rewarding experience. These beautifully bound books will be a priceless gift. Call on **0330 822 1724** and visit lifebookuk.com to find out more.

12. Diana Klisaris is dedicated to creating timeless, elegant and considered pieces for the empowered woman. The brand redefines traditional statement pieces through innovative craftsmanship and manipulation techniques to create transitional, exclusive garments designed with longevity in mind. Emulating sophisticated femininity, their AW collection exudes timeless design using luxury fabrics. Visit dianaklisaris.com and follow on IG [@dianaklisaris](https://www.instagram.com/dianaklisaris)

13. Simon Wright offers a complete bespoke service, making your jewellery in platinum and gold using the finest diamonds and gemstones. An appointment involves viewing stones, a short tour of the workshop, and a sit down design session all in his Clerkenwell studio workshop. By appointment only. Visit sw-jewellery.com or follow on IG [@sw_jewellery](https://www.instagram.com/sw_jewellery)



14. Bold and breath-taking, the launch 'Out of the Blue' collection from **Something Blue by Ostro** makes for an unmissable statement. Featuring 'Off the Cuff' cufflinks, and a 'Hidden Gem' ring, each piece boasts an Ostro blue topaz gem, set in Sterling Silver and pristine white enamel for that extra dazzling effect. Visit somethingbluebyostro.com or follow [@somethingbluebyostro](https://www.instagram.com/somethingbluebyostro) on IG and treat yourself or the men in your life to a gift destined to stand out.



15. Luxury scented candles and crystal pens created by **Elisa Canali** and her team. After years of research for the perfect scented candle and the perfect luxury pen, Elisa and her team worked for one year to create a unique ethically sourced luxury collection. Sandalwood and amber scents will infuse your space, paired with black obsidian and citrine crystals. The luxury pens come in clear quartz, smokey quartz, citrine and rose quartz. The perfect piece to write your own dreams. Available for international shipping. Visit elisacanali.com and follow [@theelicanali](https://www.instagram.com/theelicanali) on IG.



16. Your dog's diet will soon rival your own when you switch to **Pooch & Mutt**. Their online exclusive Primal range is naturally hypoallergenic with anti-inflammatory properties and boasts 80% meat and natural superfoods to keep your dog happy and healthy. Use code 'GQ' for 20% off everything online (expires 31/03/2023) at poochandmutt.co.uk and follow [@poochandmutt](https://www.instagram.com/poochandmutt) on IG.



17. **Ro Collective** is a Latina-owned fine jewellery brand creating modern designs in New York City. Each Ro Collective piece is meticulously handcrafted with high quality ethically sourced gold, gemstones, and diamonds. This New Year, treat yourself to one of their mood rings. Check out the collection at therocollective.com and [@therocollective](https://www.instagram.com/therocollective) on IG.



18. 'Lip Cure' is **NIMONÉ Beauty**'s best seller; packed with concentrated ingredients, leaving your lips feeling ultra hydrated and refreshed. This emollient is great for everyday application and can also be used as a nighttime treatment. The Lip Cure Collection offers soft shimmer pink and peach shades as well as a clear shine. Vegan, cruelty-free and artisan handmade. Visit nimonebeauty.com and follow [@nimonebeauty](https://www.instagram.com/nimonebeauty) on IG.



19. Channel the essence of **Mona Lisa**, the pandora's box of luxury fragrance oils created to awaken the visionary within. Each bottle radiates with the brilliance of Herkimer Diamonds, to ignite the spirit and illuminate the Universe. Finally a signature scent for the ultimate muse. Visit monalisapure.com and follow [@monalisapureoil](https://www.instagram.com/monalisapureoil) for inspiration on IG.



20. **COVERLUXESILK** features their best seller, Lash Luxe Advanced Eyelash Growth Serum, which is available for £39.05. It features a cutting-edge formula that compounds a blend of organic plant extracts and pro-vitamins. You can discover their exclusive range presenting the finest hair, lash, and skin products at coverluxesilk.com and follow [@coverluxesilk](https://www.instagram.com/coverluxesilk) on socials.

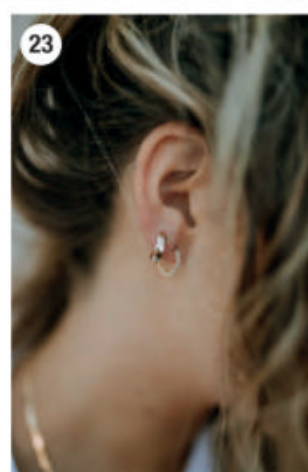


21. **GGG Jewellery Co** was established in Derbyshire in 2017, with their first collection launching in 2020, and new collections released monthly. Specialising in alternative fine jewellery, all of their designs are produced and developed in house in their workshop from conception to finishing, using ethically sourced precious metals and gemstones. Shop their newest collections: [@gggjewelleryco](https://www.instagram.com/gggjewelleryco) on IG and visit gggjewelleryco.com



22. **D BY DILYS** impeccably handcrafted fine jewels are made to elevate any bracelet stack. The Arena bangles are each designed to spotlight a natural collectible gemstone; from diamonds to sapphires and more. Order and browse for more on IG [@dbd_finejewels](https://www.instagram.com/dbd_finejewels) and dbydilys.com

23. **Raquel Rosalie Jewelry** is a high quality hand curated jewellery brand. Each piece is handmade and carefully thought out and designed by Raquel herself. Made of only 14 carat gold filled or higher, the pieces are durable, waterproof, and at an affordable price. Visit them at raquelrosalie.com or on IG [@raquelrosalie](https://www.instagram.com/raquelrosalie)



24. **Low Beauty** Hydrating Green Tea Facial Mask. Low Beauty proudly introduces their low waste hydrogel sheet mask which leaves skin feeling luxuriously hydrated. Carefully made with ingredients including glycerin, red seaweed, and polysaccharides. The mask is water-soluble, meaning it breaks down in boiling water, and comes packaged in a prepaid return envelope to make recycling the mask's satchel super easy! Visit lowbeauty.com and follow [@lowbeautyco](https://www.instagram.com/lowbeautyco) on IG.



25. **JoJo Rings** upcycles old keys into one-of-a-kind jewellery and donates \$5 with every purchase. Each key is unique, making their rings and wraps a statement to wear. You can even find vintage car keys in their speciality shop! Send in your own special key for an even more meaningful ring. Learn more at jojorings.com and follow along on IG [@jojo_rings](https://www.instagram.com/jojo_rings)



26. **WUFF** was born from the urge to bring cool walk-wear to the dog world for both dogs and humans. They create, bold, beautiful, stand-out pieces for your dog that everyone will love, and have plans to expand the collection to matching trench coats, aesthetic bowls and stylish home accessories. Explore more at wuffco.shop and [@wuff.co](https://www.instagram.com/wuff.co) on IG.



27. **Nurache** (Nura: Light, Che: God will increase) is a memoir of Kennedy Raye's transnational sojourning. These coconut wax, cruelty-free, vegan luxe candles pour forth the prayers of her heart: abundant peace and blessings. Experience the light and warmth [@nuracheshop](https://www.instagram.com/nuracheshop) and nurache.com



SNOW HOMES

Who wouldn't want to escape to their very own piste-side property? It's time to get your skis on and explore the finest homes across the Alps and beyond



CHALET ST CHRISTOPHE, SWITZERLAND

One of Verbier's largest private chalets, this 13-bedroom residence can be subdivided into two halves or combined to create one huge family home. With mountain views from all sides, its interiors are warm and inviting, with high, beamed ceilings, open fireplaces and fantastic living spaces. POA.

Sphere Estates: 020 3617 1360

If you love to ski, the idea of owning a chalet in your favourite resort is likely to be somewhere at the top of your wish-list. There's the appeal of simply jumping on a plane and arriving in a cosy home-from-home, with no need to lug around cumbersome ski equipment or face the prospect of booking accommodation

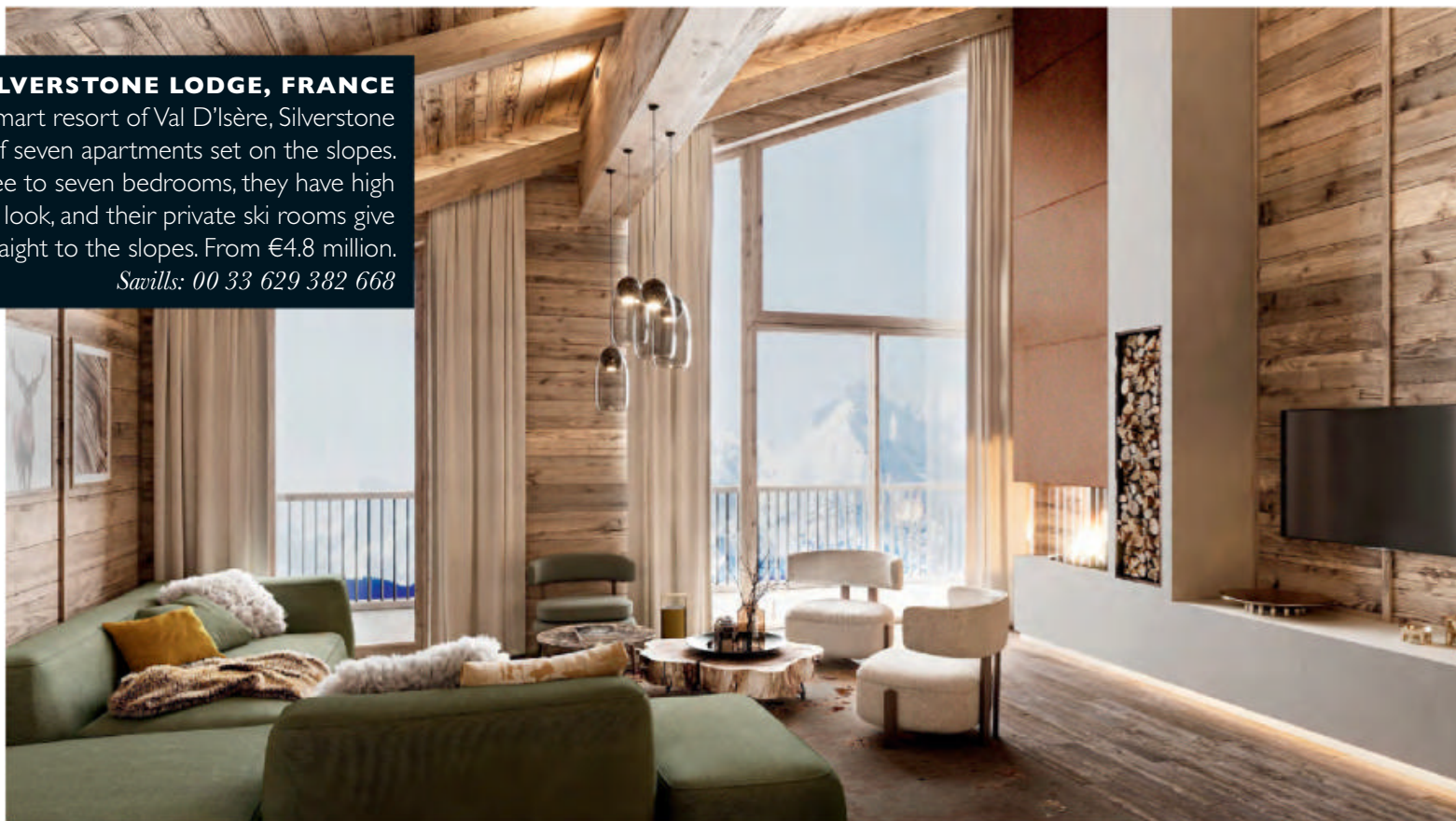
months or even years in advance to secure the most in-demand dates. Indeed, properties in the mountains remain perennially popular, no matter what the political or economic climate. 'Prime residential ski property demand has remained undeterred,' says Jeremy Rollason, head of Savills Ski. 'It's an attractive store for accumulated wealth, as well as a sentimental, life-aspiration purchase for many.'

Pictured above is Chalet St Christophe, a truly breathtaking house within walking distance of the centre of Verbier. At over 13,000 square feet, it's one of the resort's largest private homes, and with 13 bedrooms, there's plenty of space to host friends and family. Set across four floors, it has panoramic mountain views towards the Trient Glacier and the French and Italian borders. The generously

SILVERSTONE LODGE, FRANCE

Located in the smart resort of Val D'Isère, Silverstone Lodge is a collection of seven apartments set on the slopes. Ranging from three to seven bedrooms, they have high ceilings and a rustic look, and their private ski rooms give easy access straight to the slopes. From €4.8 million.

Savills: 00 33 629 382 668



CHALET LARA, SWITZERLAND

Completed in 2016, this piste-side property is tucked away in the charming Swiss village of Grimentz. Finished to a high standard using local materials, it's got plenty of outdoor living space, as well as a private garden. CHF 3.25 million.

Alpine Property Finders: 020 7692 0786



FOUR SEASONS RESORT AND RESIDENCES, USA

Vail in Colorado has long been a magnet for keen skiers, and what better place to base yourself than at a private residence that's part of a Four Seasons resort? You can enjoy all the comfort and amenities of a luxury hotel, while having the independence of a self-contained home.

fourseasons.com/vail





MEGÈVE, FRANCE

This recently refurbished chalet is set on an enviably large plot in the village of Choseaux, on the Mont d'Arbois side of the Megève ski area. There's a well-proportioned living room with a large fireplace and a generous master bedroom, as well as four further bedrooms. €6.8 million.

Knight Frank: 020 7861 1727

sized living and dining areas make this a fantastic spot to gather and unwind; and the restaurants, shops and nightlife of one of Switzerland's smartest resorts are also on your doorstep.

Val D'Isère is another perennially popular spot for those who enjoy the après-ski as much as spending a day on the slopes. Occupying a prime spot is Silverstone Lodge, a new collection of seven apartments which have the huge advantage of being ski-in, ski-out, so you're spared the effort of trudging to the nearest lift.

Or, if peace and quiet is a priority, Knight Frank is selling a six-bedroom chalet surrounded by trees in the village of Choseaux. Conveniently close to the shops and restaurants of Megève, it's the best of both worlds.



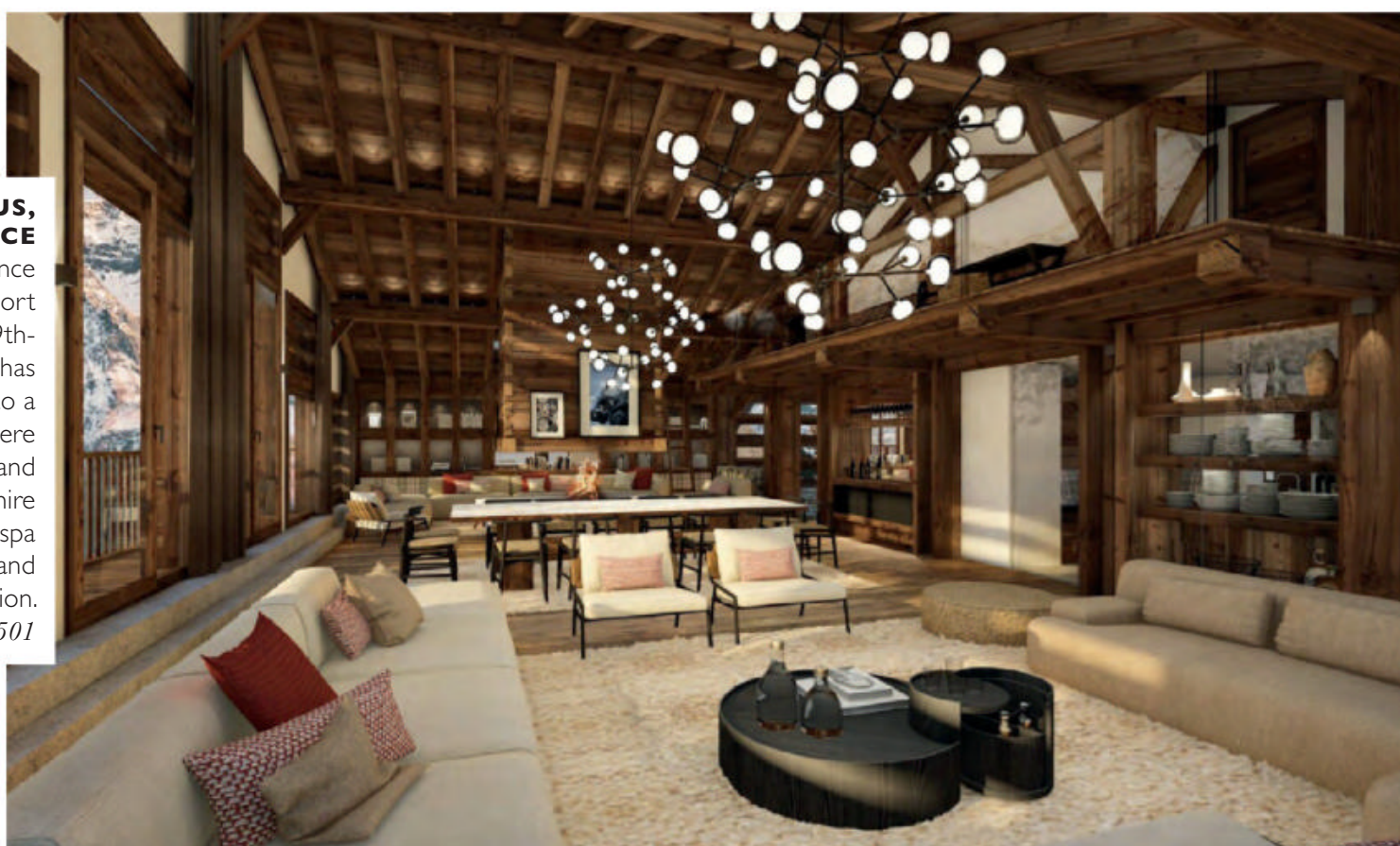
CHAMONIX, FRANCE

Try a different approach to property with August Collection's shared-ownership scheme. You can own a share in five properties across Europe – such as this elegant, newly renovated apartment in Chamonix, with a private sauna in the main bedroom – for a single fee. August's prices start from €280,000. augustcollection.co.uk

LA FERME DES DRUS, FRANCE

Located a short distance from the popular resort of Chamonix is a 19th-century farmhouse that has been transformed into a contemporary retreat. There are multiple balconies and terraces from which to admire the Alpine views, and a spa area with an indoor pool and Jacuzzi. €10.23 million.

Home Hunts: 020 8144 5501



A NEW KIND OF LUXURY

The residences in the remarkable new Six Senses Kitzbühel Alps development take Alpine living to a different level.



SIX SENSES RESIDENCES APARTMENTS

KITZBÜHEL ALPS

FROM €3,260,000

Thirty apartments with leisure residence permits, plus Six Senses Hotel & Spa facilities and ski-in, ski-out access.



2-4



2-4



140-380m²



Ski in/out

SIX SENSES RESIDENCES VILLAS

KITZBÜHEL ALPS

FROM €8,540,000

Ten exquisitely crafted villas with leisure residence permits and views over the highest peaks of the Austrian Alps.



4-7



4-7



400-700m²



Ski in/out



Pick up your complimentary copy of our **Ski Report** and **Ski Portfolio** from any of our Alpine bureaux below.

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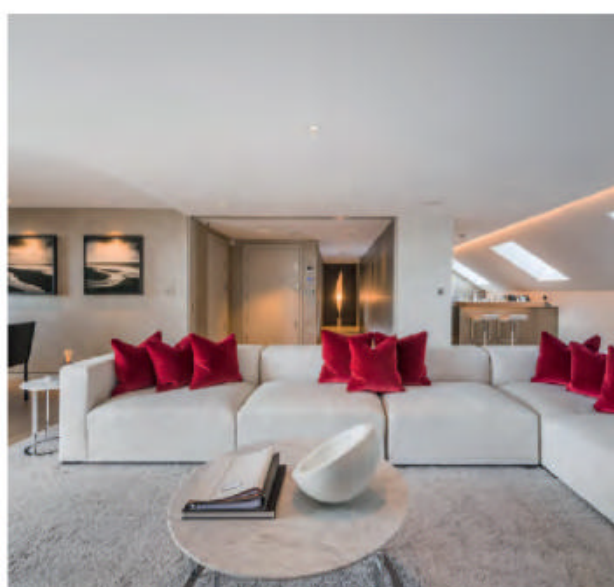
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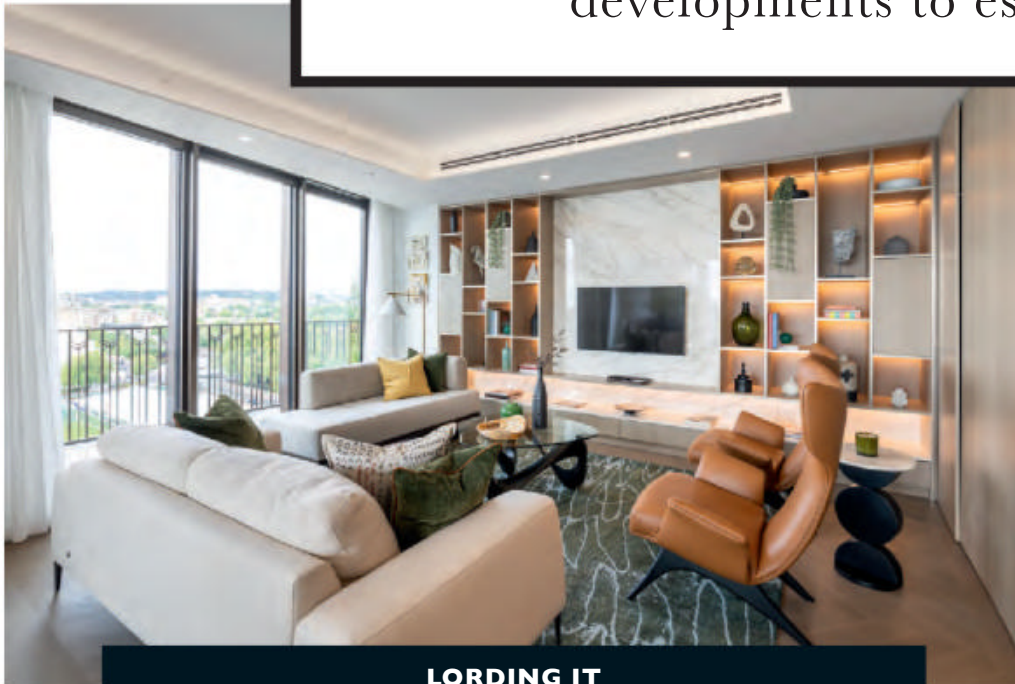


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NOTEBOOK

The latest property news, from exciting new developments to essential services



LORDING IT

Overlooking the historic Lord's Cricket Ground and close to Regent's Park, One St John's Wood is a collection of striking new apartments in one of central London's most desirable residential neighbourhoods. Built by Regal London, the 112 properties include an elegant penthouse that's been decorated by the interior design company Angel O'Donnell, with plenty of bespoke elements and a warm, contemporary atmosphere. Finishing touches come from the special One St John's Wood home-accessory collection that has been curated by the homeware brand Kalinko – a fitting way to celebrate the launch of this smart new project.

For more information, visit regal-london.co.uk

THE LETTINGS EXPERT

Based in Knightsbridge and boasting an impressive network of contacts, Tunstall Property is perfectly placed to help both landlords and prospective tenants in prime central London. 'The strength of the lettings in this area (and indeed across the UK) has been loudly reported in the press this year, with Savills and Knight Frank reporting annual growth of more than 12 per cent,' says the company founder, Mark Tunstall. If you have a property that you'd like to rent out or are looking for a place to live, he's got the inside knowledge to help you navigate this rapidly changing market.

For more information, visit tunstallproperty.co.uk

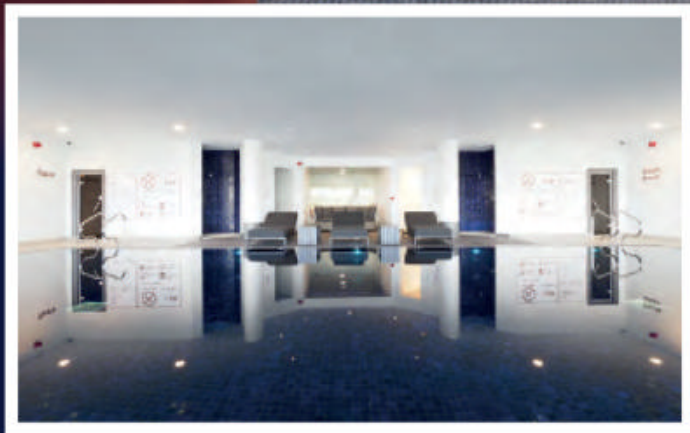


SECOND HOMES WITHOUT THE STRESS

Whether it's a cottage in the Cotswolds or a chalet in the Alps, purchasing a second home seems like an incredibly appealing prospect – at least until you start quizzing those who already own one. Conversations inevitably turn to the rather mundane subjects of endless maintenance tasks, constant bills, and the logistical stress of letting it out, be it to friends or strangers. Enter August, a company that facilitates shared ownership of a number of different properties, curating a selection of unique residences in the most desirable European locations. It streamlines the entire process – finding and vetting like-minded co-owners; establishing a co-ownership company; buying and transforming the homes; as well as managing the properties. There's a very big upside – you get to own a share in five properties instead of just one, making holidays a lot more interesting. You also get to enjoy all of the advantages of owning multiple homes without any of the boring bits. From €280,000.

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● FINAL SHOT

In Tokyo, Olympic BMXer Kye Whyte brought home silver – and a taste for bubblegum ice cream. Next on the menu? Gold in Paris. Read all about it in his interview inside this issue.

T-shirt, £150, by **Isabel Marant**. Gilet, tracksuit bottoms, prices upon request, by **Ouest Paris**. Trainers, £555, by **Moncler**. Watch, £10,850, by **Rolex**. Jewellery, his own.

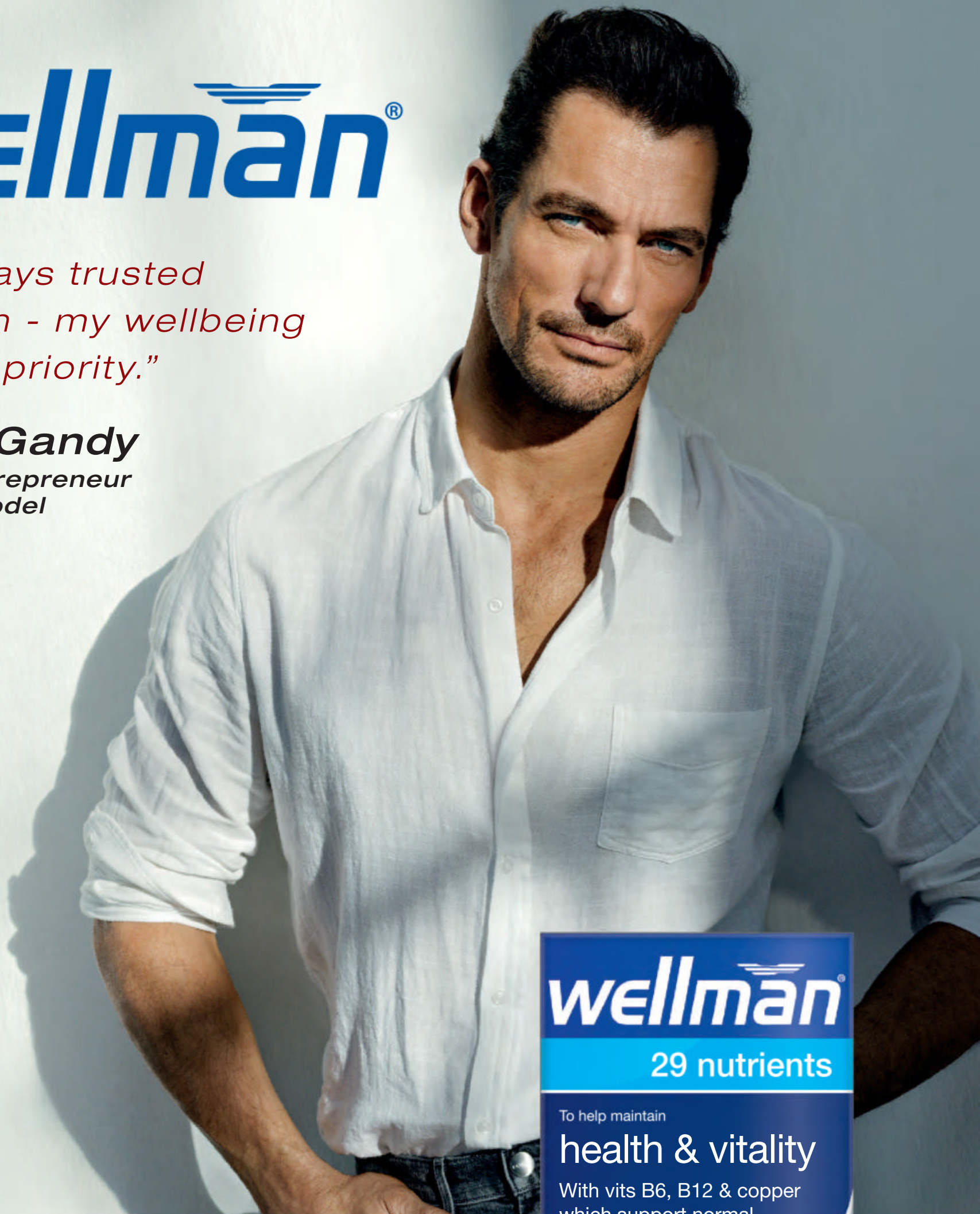


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